

Report Part Title: Uganda

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CHAPTER 4

Uganda

Uganda acceded to the APRM as one of its founding members in 2003. Five years later, in February 2008, the country hosted an official CRM that conducted Uganda's first APRM country review. Uganda again hosted a CRM in November 2017, becoming the second country, after Kenya, to undergo peer review for a second time.¹⁶⁵

In line with the requirements for undergoing peer review as part of the APRM, Uganda conducted self-assessments ahead of each of the official reviews. Following these self-assessments, the country was required to submit a CSAR and an NPoA to the APRM Secretariat to prepare for the CRM. In terms of methodology, desktop research, surveys, panel interviews and focus group discussions were chosen as research methods for the compilation of the CSAR.¹⁶⁶ The APRM National Commission overseeing the CSAR also reached out to various stakeholders at both national and local levels of government to validate the report. These consisted of the private sector, academia, media, labour, women's and youth organisations, civil society and faith-based organisations.¹⁶⁷

Uganda's democracy is young and still being consolidated. A creation of imperial conquest, it gained its independence from the UK in 1962. A brief period of parliamentary democracy in the country's immediate post-independence years was eclipsed by many years of military dictatorship characterised by civil war, repression and little to no economic development.¹⁶⁸ In 1986 the National Resistance Movement (NRM) came to power, led by Yoweri Museveni – today still the president of Uganda, six consecutive presidential terms and 35 years later. The NRM introduced mechanisms that 'stabilised the economy, neutralised rebel activity, and launched a system of administration that respected human rights and promoted press freedoms'.¹⁶⁹

Uganda's democracy has undergone significant changes since 1986: until 2005, when a national referendum brought about the introduction of multiparty democracy, a no-party system with elections conducted through individual merit was the norm. Elections under the new multiparty system have taken place in 2006, 2011, 2016 and, most recently, 2021.¹⁷⁰ The 2017 CRM reports that elections in Uganda have been declared free and fair since 1996.¹⁷¹

165 APRM, *Republic of Uganda: APRM Second Country Review Report* [Uganda Second Country Review], January 2018, 2.

166 APRM, *Republic of Uganda: APRM Country Review Report No. 7* [Uganda First Country Review], January 2009, xxxvii.

167 APRM, *Uganda Second Country Review*.

168 APRM, *Uganda First Country Review*, xxxvii.

169 APRM, *Uganda Second Country Review*, 2.

170 APRM, *Uganda Second Country Review*.

171 APRM, *Uganda Second Country Review*.

Although both CRRs indicate that significant progress towards democratic consolidation and socio-economic development has been made in Uganda since the NRM came to power, they also find that significant challenges remain. They caution that certain developments in the country's political governance place its young democracy at risk, blurring the line between democracy and authoritarianism.

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Democratic consolidation

Welcoming the introduction of a multiparty system in Uganda, the first CRR of 2009 found that in terms of political governance, the country had progressed commendably towards democracy, firmly shifting away from the authoritarian system in place prior to 1986.¹⁷² According to the first CRR, this was evidenced most clearly by the NRM government's commitment to ensuring that the necessary institutions and policies for democratic consolidation had been put in place. This was expressed through the 1995 constitution and the Bill of Rights it established.¹⁷³ The government also showed its commitment to democratic consolidation and political good governance through the creation (under the constitution) of institutions geared towards the protection of democracy and promotion of human rights. These include the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC), the Inspectorate-General of Government, the Auditor-General and the Electoral Commission.¹⁷⁴

A government's will to subscribe to international and regional standards and codes can be regarded as a strong indication of its commitment to democracy and political good governance. According to the first CRR, most of the African standards and codes required under APRM stipulations had been ratified by Uganda.¹⁷⁵ These included the New Partnership for Africa's Development's Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance (2003), the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981) and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2007).¹⁷⁶ Other standards include, but are not limited to, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948); the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which the country ratified in 1995 along with its Optional Protocol; as well as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms

172 APRM, *Uganda First Country Review*.

173 APRM, *Uganda First Country Review*.

174 APRM, *Uganda First Country Review*.

175 APRM, *Uganda First Country Review*.

176 APRM, *Uganda Second Country Review*.

of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Political Rights of Women (both ratified in 1995, but not domesticated); and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (ratified in 1990).¹⁷⁷ Many of the ideals of these standards and codes are also enshrined in the country's constitution.

Having evaluated the findings of the first CRM to Uganda, the second CRR concludes overall that since 2008 Uganda has progressed remarkably in terms of 'institutionalising mechanisms to promote constitutional democracy, protect the political, economic and socio-cultural rights of its people, and especially the vulnerable groups in society'.¹⁷⁸ But the progress it refers to is legislative, evidenced primarily by the country's signing and/or ratifying important standards and codes, and domestic policies, although some areas – like women's rights – still lag behind. Yet the second CRR laments the weak implementation of these instruments.

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The task of democratic consolidation is by no means finished and there are still multiple challenges that hinder 'institutionalising and consolidating democratic governance'.¹⁷⁹ For example, the institutions responsible for safeguarding democracy in Uganda are 'battling to adjust to the new multiparty system'.¹⁸⁰ These institutions are described as severely constrained by 'inadequate resources' in terms of both staff and finances.¹⁸¹ Parliament itself has also struggled to adjust to the new multiparty system. Three years after it was abolished, the 'political culture of the no-party movement' was still present, weakening the multiparty Parliament.¹⁸² Although the first CRR acknowledged that Uganda was moving away from authoritarianism, it cautioned against possible democratic backsliding, noting clear signs of 'mounting authoritarianism and rapidly escalating corruption in the country'.¹⁸³ A constitutional amendment in 2005 that removed presidential term limits raised concerns around the undermining of Uganda's 'fledgling multiparty democracy and the emerging,

177 APRM, *Uganda First Country Review*, 44.

178 APRM, *Uganda Second Country Review*, 5.

179 APRM, *Uganda First Country Review*, xxxviii.

180 APRM, *Uganda First Country Review*, xxxviii.

181 APRM, *Uganda First Country Review*, xxxix.

182 APRM, *Uganda First Country Review*, xxxix.

183 APRM, *Uganda First Country Review*, 26.

yet still embryonic, culture of constitutionalism'.¹⁸⁴ The first CRR also noted that popular participation in this decision was 'non-existent'.¹⁸⁵

Further issues worth noting include a balance of power leaning towards the executive, decentralisation, and difficulties with managing diversity

Further issues worth noting include a balance of power leaning towards the executive, decentralisation, and difficulties with managing diversity. The government of Uganda introduced the Decentralisation Policy in 1993 with the aim of creating 'an enabling environment to bring about an accountable, efficient and effective public service' while also increasing citizen participation.¹⁸⁶ However, instead of enhancing the efficiency of the public service and local government, decentralisation has had the opposite effect. It has made local governments more dependent on the central government for funding. Although the first CRR presented decentralisation as an example of political good governance, it also acknowledged that it 'exacerbated the financial challenges of the government'.¹⁸⁷ In spite of the government's expressed commitment to fighting corruption, the first CRR found that it remained 'endemic' in Uganda, especially in the political sphere, adding to the financial challenges faced by the government.¹⁸⁸

Between reviews, many of these concerns have not been resolved and, in some instances, have worsened. The second CRR concludes that the implementation of legislative and policy commitments remains a challenge. This is due in part to a 'lack of sufficient human and financial resources necessary for the fullest possible implementation of its policies'; concerns it shares with the first CRR.¹⁸⁹ The second CRR finds that because local governments have become overly dependent on the national government as a result of decentralisation, a return to centralisation is underway.¹⁹⁰ Its findings indicate that, on paper at least, while there is a clear separation of powers in Uganda, 'there is the perception that the executive remains unduly dominant in the country'.¹⁹¹ This power imbalance is found to be inhibiting the functions of the judiciary and of Parliament.¹⁹²

184 APRM, *Uganda First Country Review*, 59.

185 APRM, *Uganda First Country Review*, 64.

186 APRM, *Uganda Second Country Review*, 248.

187 APRM, *Uganda Second Country Review*, 9.

188 APRM, *Uganda First Country Review*, 94.

189 APRM, *Uganda Second Country Review*, 10.

190 APRM, *Uganda Second Country Review*.

191 APRM, *Uganda Second Country Review*, 7.

192 APRM, *Uganda Second Country Review*.

While Uganda's second country review was underway, another constitutional amendment to remove the age limit for presidential candidates was being debated. Although this was not mentioned in the CSAR, the 2017 CRM finds that it is 'the most explosive issue in the country at the time'.¹⁹³ The second CRR also notes significant concerns with regard to competition for political power. In spite of constitutional provisions for fair competition for political power and other relevant codes and standards to which the country subscribes, the second CRR finds that 'the political playing field in Uganda remains far from level'.¹⁹⁴ Some of the biggest warning signs in this area include political party funding disparities, where some 80% of government funds are channelled to the ruling party; the ability of the ruling party to use state resources and facilities for campaigning; media bias towards the ruling party with more than 200 radio stations seemingly linked to individuals with ties to the ruling party; and shrinking political space as a result of the eagerness with which the Public Order Management Act (2013) is implemented.¹⁹⁵

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Corruption

The first CRR noted that the government, well aware of the devastating impact of corruption on development and progress, had taken a combined legal and institutional approach to combat the phenomenon.¹⁹⁶ The Inspectorate of Government, for example, is mandated to fight corruption and empowered by a vast legislative arsenal. This includes the Prevention of Corruption Act of 1970 (replaced by the Anti-Corruption Act of 2009), the Penal Code Act, Local Government Financial and Accounting Regulations of 1998, and the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Act of 2003.¹⁹⁷ This is clear evidence of a commitment to fighting corruption, at least at the institutional and legislative level. In practice, however, anti-corruption institutions are not given the necessary resources to fulfil their core functions. On occasions when they do succeed, interference from the executive branch of government prevents follow-through on penalties for offenders, especially those in senior positions.¹⁹⁸

193 APRM, *Uganda Second Country Review*, 7.

194 APRM, *Uganda Second Country Review*, 46.

195 APRM, *Uganda Second Country Review*, 46.

196 APRM, *Uganda First Country Review*.

197 APRM, *Uganda First Country Review*.

198 APRM, *Uganda First Country Review*.

In practice, anti-corruption institutions are not given the necessary resources to fulfil their core functions

The second CRR reports no evidence of corruption levels improving, mentioning that corruption in Uganda has become ‘too deep-rooted to remove with the type of measures that have been attempted so far’ and urging the government to change its approach to fighting the scourge.¹⁹⁹ Measures traditionally relied on in Uganda include the creation of institutions dedicated to fighting corruption, improved legal frameworks to tighten crackdown measures, and empowering dedicated institutions to fight corruption. Among these measures are the Whistle Blowers’ Protection Act (2010), the Anti-Corruption Act (2010), and the Witness Protection Bill (drafted in 2015). Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index scored Uganda 26 out of 100 in 2008 (where 0 is the most corrupt and 100 the least). This indicates high levels of perceived corruption.²⁰⁰ In 2017 Uganda again scored 26/100, suggesting no real improvements in weeding out corruption.²⁰¹ The measures in place in the country have failed to meaningfully reduce corruption due to a lack of resources.²⁰²

Gender inequality

Sections 32 and 33 of the constitution address gender equality and tie in with Section 21, which addresses freedom from discrimination.²⁰³ Uganda has also committed to gender equality and the empowerment of women through various international and regional standards and codes. Among the most important of these are CEDAW, the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, and the UN Millennium Development Goals.²⁰⁴

However, the first CRR noted that the government had signed but not ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol).²⁰⁵ By the time the second country review was conducted, Uganda had ratified the protocol but with reservations on articles 14(1)(a) and 14(2)(c).²⁰⁶ Article 14(1)(a) states that women have ‘the right to control their fertility’ while Article 14(2)(c) places the responsibility on governments party to the protocol to ‘protect the reproductive rights of women by authorising medical abortion’ where a woman has become impregnated

199 APRM, *Uganda Second Country Review*, 9.

200 Transparency International, “Corruption Perceptions Index”.

201 Transparency International, “Corruption Perceptions Index”.

202 APRM, *Uganda Second Country Review*.

203 APRM, *Uganda First Country Review*.

204 APRM, *Uganda First Country Review*.

205 APRM, *Uganda First Country Review*.

206 APRM, *Uganda Second Country Review*.

through 'sexual assault, rape, incest, and where the continued pregnancy endangers the mental and physical health of the mother' or puts the life of either mother or foetus at risk.²⁰⁷ Both the delay to ratify and subsequent reservations on Article 14 can be attributed to opposition from religious groups in Uganda. In addition, Article 14(2)(c) was found to contravene domestic law: read together with the constitution, the Penal Code dictates that abortion is illegal.²⁰⁸ Neither CEDAW nor the Maputo Protocol has been domesticated.

Through affirmative action the government of Uganda has sought to correct 'historical imbalances' by allowing women a seat at the table, so to speak.²⁰⁹ This includes affirmative action to improve women's representation; affirmative action in education for girls, which sees their enrolment numbers increasing; and affirmative action for persons with disabilities, which also sees disabled women benefitting.²¹⁰ The political participation of women in all levels of government has been enhanced and encouraged. According to the first CRR, women's representation in Parliament increased to 25% in 2008, up from 18% in 1993. At the time of the first review, five of the 24 ministers and 11 of the 44 deputy ministers in Uganda were women. Furthermore, the number of women in key positions in the civil service, judiciary and other key sectors also increased.²¹¹

The political participation of women in all levels of government has been enhanced and encouraged

Since the 2008 review new national laws and ratified standards and conventions for the further enhancement of women's rights in the country have been enacted. These include the Labour Union Regulations (Labour Union Act No. 7 of 2006), the National Employment Policy of 2011, the Workers' Compensation Regulations of 2012, and the Sexual Harassment Regulations of 2012.²¹² The 2017 CRM notes 'increased recognition' on the part of the government of the necessity of 'policies that meet service needs of women, and redress social injustices towards them'.²¹³ It singles out the medico-legal services available to victims of gender-based violence as being of 'paramount importance in providing access to legal services, justice and redress for victims of gender-based violence'.²¹⁴

207 AU, "Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa", 2003, 15.

208 Victor Oluwasina Ayeni, ed., *The Impact of the African Charter and the Maputo Protocol in Selected African States* (Pretoria: Pretoria University Law Press, 2016).

209 APRM, *Uganda First Country Review*, 98.

210 APRM, *Uganda Second Country Review*.

211 Government of Uganda, Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, *National Report on Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: Final Report*, June 2019.

212 APRM, *Uganda Second Country Review*.

213 APRM, *Uganda Second Country Review*, 245.

214 APRM, *Uganda Second Country Review*, 242.

While undeniable progress has been recorded, the government falls short in its practical implementation of legislation intended to enhance gender equality and the rights of women. The second CRR therefore finds that discrimination against women is still rampant, often at institutional and legislative levels.²¹⁵ It notes that numerous religious and cultural traditions are 'biased against women and continue to inhibit progress towards full gender parity and equality'.²¹⁶ While legislation exists to improve gender equality and women's rights in Uganda, in some cases it also ironically works against it. One notable example highlighted in both CRRs is the Land Act of 1998, which essentially denies women ownership rights since it addresses only their rights to 'access land use and the occupancy of land'.²¹⁷

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Various other laws (the Registration of Titles Act and Marriage Act, for example) were also found to contain 'discriminatory clauses against women', and the first CRR strongly advised that these pieces of legislation be revised. The second CRR, however, notes that no progress has been made in this regard.²¹⁸ The Domestic Violence Act (2010) is another example of discriminatory legislation, since it excludes unmarried persons from its provisions.²¹⁹ There is also legislation that penalises sexual orientation. The Sexual Offences Act (2011), for example, makes provision solely for 'heterosexual relations', thereby overlooking an entire group of people who could also be affected by sexual violence.²²⁰ The act was made into law in 2021 and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI) relationships are now criminalised.²²¹ The LGBTQI community is not only overlooked in legislation – the CRRs also do not mention LGBTQI issues. Considering the extent to which gender equality is evaluated, this is a significant oversight. Furthermore, certain traditional practices such as early marriage are also found to 'encourage the violation of women's rights' and link directly to a high school dropout rate among girls in Uganda.²²² Female genital mutilation has not been eradicated and directly violates those instruments that provide for women's rights over their reproductive health.²²³

215 APRM, *Uganda Second Country Review*.

216 APRM, *Uganda Second Country Review*, 8–9.

217 APRM, *Uganda Second Country Review*, 76.

218 APRM, *Uganda Second Review Report*, 76.

219 Sarah Ssali, "A Matrix and Analysis of Gender Equality Law and Policies in Uganda" (School of Women and Gender Studies, Kampala, April 2019).

220 Ssali, "A Matrix and Analysis", 28.

221 Mimi Mefo Takambou, "Uncertain Future for LGBT+ Rights in Uganda as Controversial Bill Is Passed", *Deutsche Welle*, May 5, 2021.

222 APRM, *Uganda Second Country Review*.

223 APRM, *Uganda Second Country Review*.

Discriminatory legislation and patriarchal practices perpetuating the ‘feminisation of poverty’ have meant that there has been little progress in the economic empowerment of women in Uganda.²²⁴ On a related note, due to Uganda’s high fertility rate it has one of the youngest populations in the world. The average Ugandan woman gives birth to seven children – one of the highest birth rates globally. As a result of its rapidly growing population, Uganda has an alarmingly high youth unemployment rate, as acknowledged in both country reviews. At the time of the second CRR the youth unemployment rate was 83.2%.²²⁵

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Managing diversity

Managing diversity includes issues related to gender, refugees, ethnicity and persons with disabilities. This is an area that still presents some challenges for the Ugandan government. Since independence, ‘tribal and regional divisions’ have characterised the country’s politics.²²⁶ In particular, the north–south divide has not only made managing diversity significantly more complicated but also contributed to challenges in managing intra-state conflict. The instability and conflict involving the Lord’s Resistance Army in the north of Uganda has been fuelled in part by ‘tribal or ethnic rifts and regionalism’.²²⁷ Furthermore, findings from the second CRR indicate that ethnicity has been a historical driver of political mobilisation, resulting in political competition that divides Ugandans along ethno-linguistic lines.²²⁸

Both CRRs find that the government, despite its legislative commitment to the protection and promotion of minority rights, has failed to facilitate the practical implementation of relevant standards. It has also neglected to include minority concerns in policymaking, while institutions like the UHRC that are mandated to advocate for and protect the rights of minorities are constrained by a lack of resources.²²⁹

Uganda is home to some 65 indigenous communities of varying sizes. The 2017 CRM notes that the smaller indigenous communities are often at a disadvantage, and many have

224 APRM, *Uganda Second Country Review*, 247.

225 APRM, *Uganda Second Country Review*, 251.

226 APRM, *Uganda First Country Review*, 297.

227 APRM, *Uganda Second Country Review*, 244.

228 APRM, *Uganda Second Country Review*, 244.

229 APRM, *Uganda Second Country Review*.

been subjected to 'forced removals from ancestral lands and exclusion from governance processes'.²³⁰ This has led to a direct denial of their rights as provisioned through key legislative and policy documents. These include articles 32, 36 and 37 of the constitution, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.²³¹ The second CRR cautions that the marginalisation experienced by ethnic minorities could become a future source of conflict if not rectified with haste. It points to existing ethnic conflicts in 2017 between the Bagwere and Banyole, and the Bagwere and Bagisu, over the Namatala wetland.²³² Uganda's 17 ethnic minority groups also face significant challenges. For example, the Batwa, one such minority group, have been moved from their ancestral land to allow for the creation of the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Park. The Batwa used to live off the land, using the forest as their main supply of food and medicine. Since the creation of the national park the Batwa community has been forced to live outside the forest and has experienced an increase in child mortality.²³³

Sustainable development is virtually impossible in conflict conditions. In response to this, the government has established the Northern Uganda Reconstruction Programme I and II, the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund and the Peace, Recovery and Development Programme.²³⁴ Although these are playing a role in bringing an end to the instability in the north of the country, corruption in service delivery and procurement threatens to reverse their successes.²³⁵ The second CRR finds that management of diversity presents a specific challenge to socio-economic development, impacting 'gender, refugee management, persons with disabilities and ethnic minorities'.²³⁶

Health and education

When the NRM assumed power in 1986, it found a social sector that was severely neglected and in desperate need of overhaul. These years of neglect were most evident in healthcare and education.²³⁷

Since then, public access to education and healthcare has improved significantly. The first CRR mentioned nationwide increases in the number of children enrolled in primary and secondary education institutions through the government's Universal Primary Education and Universal Secondary Education programmes.²³⁸

230 APRM, *Uganda Second Country Review*, 244.

231 APRM, *Uganda Second Country Review*.

232 APRM, *Uganda Second Country Review*.

233 APRM, *Uganda Second Country Review*.

234 APRM, *Uganda First Country Review*.

235 APRM, *Uganda First Country Review*.

236 APRM, *Uganda Second Country Review*, 245.

237 APRM, *Uganda First Country Review*, xlvii.

238 APRM, *Uganda First Country Review*.

Public access to education and healthcare has improved significantly

Apart from these, several legislative instruments have also been enacted to enhance girls' access to education. These include the National Strategy for Girls' Education (2014–2019) of 2004 and the National Gender Policy of 2007.²³⁹ Access to healthcare has also improved, and the government has made major strides in reducing the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the country from 18.5% in the 1990s to 6.4% by 2005.²⁴⁰ According to 2019 estimates, this has decreased further to 5.8% of the country's adult population.²⁴¹

The success of these initiatives may have been the result of the 'capacity and political initiative' with which the government has introduced public policy.²⁴² For example, the 2017 CRM notes that the government has reduced poverty significantly through its Poverty Eradication Action Plan – from 56% in 1992 to 19.7% in 2012/13. The Uganda National Household Survey conducted around the time of the second country review showed that national poverty had increased to 27%.²⁴³ This is, however, lower than the poverty rate of 31% recorded in 2005/6 shortly before the first country review.²⁴⁴ The strides made in socio-economic development could provide valuable lessons for other African countries. After all, the purpose of the APRM is not only to identify governance issues but also to share best practices.

Cross-cutting issues

The APRM believes that 'the quality of democracy and political governance in a country determines its socio-economic development prospects'.²⁴⁵ It is therefore important to acknowledge those sections where these two thematic areas intersect.

For example, standards and codes have played a big role in the progress made in both democracy and political governance, and socio-economic development in Uganda. Despite this, the people of Uganda are not fully aware of those agreements that have been signed, ratified and domesticated.²⁴⁶ The first CRR mentioned agreements and protocols that were, at the time, neither signed nor ratified by the country. These included the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or

239 APRM, *Uganda Second Country Review*.

240 APRM, *Uganda First Country Review*.

241 Avert, "HIV and AIDS in Uganda".

242 APRM, *Uganda Second Country Review*, 197.

243 APRM, *Uganda Second Country Review*, 197.

244 APRM, *Uganda First Country Review*.

245 APRM, *Uganda Second Country Review*, 5.

246 APRM, *Uganda First Country Review*.

Punishment; and the [AU Convention for the Elimination of Mercenarism in Africa](#).²⁴⁷ The second CRR does not mention these standards specifically. The first CRR also noted that the government had ‘no systematic and comprehensive approach to the ratification and implementation of outstanding standards and codes’, and the assumption was therefore that no change had been recorded in this regard.²⁴⁸

The issue of land is also of particular importance in Uganda. The 2017 CRM describes land as ‘an important factor in addressing poverty, inequality, investment, unemployment and sustainable and liveable urbanisation’.²⁴⁹ It notes a particular inability on the part of government policymaking to ‘effectively address the duality of land use and land ownership’.²⁵⁰

Lastly, with caution against democratic backsliding highlighted by both CRRs, the events before and after Uganda’s 2021 election are a possible cause for concern. In the build-up to the election, opposition rallies were disrupted by Ugandan security forces, often citing COVID-19.²⁵¹ Opposition presidential candidates Patrick Amuriat (Forum for Democratic Change) and Robert Kyagulanyi, popularly known as Bobi Wine (National Unity Platform), were arrested during these rallies, along with members of their respective parties and journalists. Protesters demanding Kyagulanyi’s release were dispersed by security forces, which deployed teargas, violent beatings and live ammunition. A total of 54 people were reported to have died in the incident.²⁵² The government also ordered a nationwide Internet shutdown and prevented election monitoring groups from observing the elections.²⁵³ These actions undermine democracy and threaten to undo what progress has been recorded in Uganda in the democracy and political governance thematic area.

Conclusion

From both CRRs it is clear the government of Uganda is committed to enhancing democracy, political governance and socio-economic development. Yet much has changed since these reviews were completed. No doubt, the COVID-19 pandemic will create new challenges, placing severe strain especially on poverty reduction. The constitutional

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247 APRM, *Uganda First Country Review*.

248 APRM, *Uganda First Country Review*, xvii.

249 APRM, *Uganda Second Country Review*, 250.

250 APRM, *Uganda Second Country Review*, 250.

251 Human Rights Watch, “[Uganda: Elections Marred by Violence](#)”, January 21, 2021.

252 Human Rights Watch, “[Uganda: Elections Marred](#)”.

253 Human Rights Watch, “[Uganda: Elections Marred](#)”.

amendments relating to term and age limits for presidential candidates put progress in democratic consolidation at risk. Reflections on the elections of 2021 confirm the findings of the second CRR regarding fair political competition. The violence leading up to and following the elections stands in stark contrast to the government's commitment to human rights and democracy previously acknowledged. It is therefore important that the commitment to democracy, political good governance and socio-economic development also finds expression in practice instead of primarily existing in the realm of legislation.