JOURNAL OF ANTI-CORRUPTION LAW

2026 Volume 10(1) Pages 1 - 25

Appreciation or Corruption: Giving Gifts to MPs and the Right to Political Participation in Uganda

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ABSTRACT

The Parliament of Uganda has a unicameral and revered system and is the only institution with a mandate to make laws, with its members elected every five years. The Constitution of Uganda supports the core functions of parliament that include legislation, oversight, and representation. However, some bills are passed at the insistence of the president himself, after Members of Parliament (MPs) of the National Resistance Movement party and some opposition MPs receive cash gifts from the president. Using the human rights-based approach as a framework of analysis, this article examines the bizarre practice of giving gifts to MPs when contentious decisions are to be made by the Parliament of Uganda, as a form of corruption, and its impact on the right to political participation. The data was collected using the document review method. This article finds and argues that whereas the government construes giving gifts as appreciation or facilitation to the MPs, in the public eye, it is grand corruption – bribery – which impairs the legislative arm of government, particularly the ability of the MPs to engage in free and independent debates as well as decisions on national matters. The article concludes that this affects and violates the right to political participation and representation of citizens, and other interrelated rights. The article recommends and posits a more transparent and accountable system of facilitating MPs to uphold the independence of the legislature and its ability to make impartial laws and policies that protect the right to political participation and other fundamental rights in Uganda.

Keywords: *Appreciation, Corruption, Right to Political Participation*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Inspectorate of Government Act, 2002, defines corruption as "the abuse of public office for private gain and includes but is not limited to embezzlement, bribery, nepotism, influence peddling, theft of public funds or assets, fraud, forgery, causing financial or property loss and false accounting in public affairs".[1] Corruption operates and exists in dark and opaque systems and societies. It hates light, participation and accountability. It frowns at questions or scrutiny. It is an enemy to openness, transparency and suitability. It befriends greed, avarice and selfishness. It cannot survive in a system of good governance or a clean and just society.[2] As noted by former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan in the foreword to the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), corruption is

> an insidious plague that has a wide range of corrosive effects on societies. It undermines democracy and the rule of law, leads to violations of human rights, distorts markets, erodes the quality of life and allows organised crime, terrorism and other threats to human security to flourish. This evil phenomenon is found in all countries, big and small, rich and poor, but it is in the developing world that its effects are most destructive. [3]

Corruption hurts the poor disproportionately by diverting funds intended for development, undermining a government's ability to provide basic services, feeding inequality and injustice, and discouraging foreign aid and investment. Corruption is a key element in economic underperformance and a major obstacle to poverty-alleviation and development. Scholars argue that Africans are embedded in a network of relationships in which corrupt patrons bribe

1 The Inspectorate of Government (nd) *Guide on the Role of Citizens in the Fight against Corruption* at 4, available at https://www.igg.go.ug/media/files/publications/IG_guide_on_the_role_of_citizens_in_the_fight_against_corruption.pdf (visited 2 April 2026).

2 Sarfo-Kantankah KS (2018) "Corruption is a Big Issue: A Corpus-assisted Study of the Discursive Construction of Corruption in Ghanaian Parliamentary Discourse" 29(1) *Legon Journal of the Humanities* 226-258 at 242.)

3 United Nations (2003) *United Nations convention against corruption*. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Vienna, available at https://www.unodc.org/documents/brussels/UN_Convention_Against_Corruption.pdf (visited 15 April 2026).

citizens to participate. This network is often referred to as clientelism and provides the link between corruption and participation.[4]

Ekeh underlines that colonialism created two distinct publics in Africa with conflicting moral frameworks, explaining post-colonial corruption. Ekeh argues that the *primordial public* (ethnic/local group) is guided by a moral, indigenous ethic, while the *civic public* (state/administration) is amoral, viewed as a source of resources to be exploited.[5] In 1962, Uganda became independent from British rule and established its own electoral processes. Under the first post-independence Ugandan government, called the Uganda People's Congress, high-level corruption in government was limited. During this period, government officials were "reputed for their integrity" and made choices that helped to decrease corruption within the country. The research portrays the leaders as inherently moral but provides no other explanation for their integrity, making the reason for the officials' honesty unclear.[6] In 1971 increasing authoritarianism led to a military coup which forced a change of national leadership and resulted in the spread of corruption as a means for the leaders to maintain power.[7] Corruption remained a problem through successive changes in leadership in the following years.[8] The National Resistance Movement (NRM) came to power in 1986 through the National Resistance Army (NRA) led by Yoweri Museveni, the current president of Uganda.[9] The NRM sought to create legislative reforms in order to curb systemic corruption.[10] Although it initially stated that eliminating corruption was one of its top priorities, in subsequent years and into the present, corruption remains an issue. In fact, many

4 Inman K & Andrews JT (2009) *Corruption and Political Participation in Africa: Evidence from Survey and Experimental Research* Midwest Political Science Associationat 1, available at https://fsi-live.s3.us-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/evnts/media/Inman_Andrews_Corruption_and_Participation_in_Africa.pdf (visited 2 April 2026).

5 Ekeh PP (1975) "Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement" 17(1) *Journal of Comparative Studies in Society and History* 91-112 at 92.

6 Tangri R & Mwenda AM (2018) "Elite Corruption and Politics in Uganda" 46(2) *Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 177–194 at 177.

7 Flanary R & Watt D (1999) "The State of Corruption: A Case Study of Uganda" 20(3) *Third World Quarterly* 515–536 at 516.

8 Flanary & Watt (1999) at 518.

9 Flanary & Watt (1999) at 518.

10 Wamara CK (2017) "Corruption in Uganda: Does this Have Anything to Do with Social Work?" 2(1) *Journal of Human Rights and Social Work* 52–61 at 52.

members of the NRM have been involved in corruption scandals themselves.[11] Yet, at the dawn of his presidency in 1986, President Yoweri Museveni stated:

> The problem of Africa in general and Uganda in particular is not people, but leaders who want to overstay in power, which breeds impunity, corruption and promotes patronage...For us in the National Resistance Army (NRA), we shall be here for only four years, after which we shall hand over power to a free and fairly elected civilian government (Yoweri Kaguta Tibuhaburwa Museveni, 29 January 1986).

The remarks were made by Museveni during his maiden speech when taking power after a five-year civil war. Yet 39 years later, under the same leadership, corruption in Uganda remains a deeply entrenched problem weakening democratic institutions such as parliament and limiting socioeconomic progress. The government of Uganda has taken a zero-tolerance stance to corruption through a strong legal and institutional framework to eliminate corruption and misuse of power in the public domain. The prevalence of corruption is measured by three in 10 Ugandans (33.5%) who indicate that corruption happens/exists in Uganda both at the district and central government level. Corruption in the public sector is mostly exhibited through bribery (27%), embezzlement (17%), favouritism (11%) and nepotism (10%).[12] The MPs receive bribes disguised as facilitation or a*kasiim*o in *Runyankore,* one of the country's local languages. This is loosely translated as appreciation, a vice that also continues to undermine the protection of human rights in Uganda.

Whereas Makara and Wang argue that "the Museveni regime has strategically employed the law and international relationships to shore up its political position, to control the state apparatus, law fare and legal strategies have served as critical tools to contain threats to continued rule."[13] I argue that the regime is sustained by the above in addition to corruption, and it is too difficult for the same regime to fight corruption and protect human rights, such as the right to political participation.

11 Tangri & Mwenda (2018) at 7.
12 Republic of Uganda (2023) *Prevalence of Corruption in Uganda 2022/2023* at VII.
13 Makara S & Wang V (2022) "Uganda: A Story of Persistent Autocratic Rule," in Arriola LR, Rakner L & Van de Walle N (eds) *Democratic Backsliding in Africa? Autocratization, Resilience, and Contention* Oxford: Oxford University Press at 230. .

2. THE CONTEXT OF GIVING GIFTS TO MPs

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, each year, more than US$1 trillion is paid in bribes worldwide.[14] According to the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) (2023), global corruption remains stagnant, with over two-thirds of 180 countries scoring below 50 out of 100 on the CPI, underlining significant public sector corruption. Top-scoring nations (least corrupt) include Denmark and Finland, while low-scorers (most corrupt) include South Sudan and Uganda.[15] Although the causes of corruption vary from country to country, it suggests that corruption in Africa is often a direct consequence of poorly conceived legislation, policies, and institutional loopholes.[16] Persistently low or declining CPI scores usually go hand in hand with eroding democratic checks and balances, undue influence over political processes, and a failure to safeguard civic space, that affect the right to political participation. In almost two-thirds of countries whose CPI scores have significantly declined since 2012, there has been a worrying pattern of restrictions on freedoms of expression, association and assembly.[17]

Internationally, MPs being given gifts is viewed as a form of corruption and a threat to democratic governance. International instruments such as the UNCAC are opposed to gifts that influence public decision-making.[18] Tiki notes that many countries struggle with enforcing clear boundaries between legitimate gifts, bribes and symbolic tokens. The lack of clear boundaries between bribery and gifts has contributed to coercion and public-sector corruption.[19] According to the 2024 Eurobarometer, a majority of Europeans (61%) view corruption as unacceptable, but (68%), believe it is widespread in their country, while

14 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (nd) *Corruption Facts* at 1, available at https://www.unodc.org/pdf/facts_E.pdf, (visited 21 March 2026).

15 Transparency International (2024) *Corruption Perceptions Index 2023* at 4, available at https://transparencia.org.es/wp-content/uploads/Report_CPI2023_English.pdf (visited 16 January 2026).

16 Kuwali D (2024) *Corruption Proofing in Africa A Systems Thinking Approach* at 1, available at https://www.routledge.com/Corruption-Proofing-in-Africa-A-Systems-Thinking-Approach/Kuwali/p/book/9781032353883 (visited 16 April 2026).

17 Transparency International (2026) *Corruption Perceptions Index 2025* at 6, available at https://files.transparencycdn.org/images/CPI-2025-Report-EN.pdf (visited 16 April 2026).

18 UNCAC (2003) at 5.

19 Tiki S (2018) *Perceptions of Bribery Versus Gifts Within the Government Departments of Papua New Guinea,* Queensland University of Technology at 6, available at https://eprints.qut.edu.au/121496/2/Samson_Tiki_Thesis.pdf (visited 16 April 2026).

approximately one quarter (27%) feel personally affected by it in their daily lives.[20] Similarly, according to the 2025 Eurobarometer, 69% of Europeans believe that corruption is widespread in their country and 51% believe that corruption is widespread among political parties.[21]

Similarly, in Thailand, a "good" MP should maintain an office in the district and respond to problems raised by the people who argue that an MP should help with funeral expenses or treat voters to drinks at parties.[22] This often fuels clientelism, where loyalty is rewarded with personal benefits instead of national service. The Guardian newspaper reported that Qatar had spent more money on gifts and trips for British MPs than on any other country in the year preceding the FIFA World Cup hosted by Qatar. The Guardian reported that:

> Qatar has spent more money on gifts and trips for British MPs in the past year than any other country, according to *Observer* analysis that reveals the Gulf state's lobbying efforts ahead of next month's football World Cup. The Qatari government made gifts to MPs worth £251 208 in the 12 months to October 2022, including luxury hotel stays, business-class flights and tickets to horse-racing events.[23]

The Guardian added:

> The gifts for the past 12 months also far outstripped those from Qatar in any other year for which records are available, revealing how authorities ramped up efforts to charm British MPs ahead of the World Cup. Records show MPs declared about £100 000 worth of gifts and hospitality from Qatar in the five years to October 2021, but more than double that in the last 12 months alone.[24]

20 European Union *Citizens' attitudes towards corruption in the EU in 2024*, available at https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3217 (visited 10 April 2026).

21 European Union (2025) *Eurobarometer survey - Citizens' attitudes towards corruption in the EU in 2025,* Eurobarometer survey at 11, available at https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3361 (visited 10 April 2026).

22 Callaha WA & McCargo D (1996) "Vote-Buying in Thailand's Northeast: The July 1995 General Election" 36(4) *Asian Survey*376-392.

23 The Guardian (29 October 2022) *Qatar lavished British MPs with gifts ahead of World Cup*, available at https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/29/qatar-lavished-british-mps-with-250000-worth-of-freebies-ahead-of-world-cup (visited 15 April 2026).

24 The Guardian (2022).

The actions by the Qatari government created room for undue influence. From a global perspective, giving gifts to MPs is practised in some countries to induce and or influence their decisions or their ability to make decisions of both national and international importance.

In Africa giving gifts or "appreciating" MPs is often associated with facilitations, patronage politics and weak enforcement of anti-corruption mechanisms. Despite the existence of the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption (AUCPCC), Articles 7, 8 and 9,[25] most African countries lack the frameworks and institutional will to regulate the process of gifting or "appreciating" MPs. In countries like Nigeria and Kenya, reports of MPs receiving cash from executives or business elites to pass controversial laws are common. In Ghana, the June 2014 report of the Parliamentary Committee on Constitutional, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs on the National Anti-Corruption Action Plan (2012-2021) stated that:

> The Committee is convinced that corruption exists in both the public and private sectors of our country. It operates and exists in dark and opaque systems and societies. It hates light, participation, and accountability. It frowns at questions or scrutiny. It is an enemy to openness, transparency and suitability. It befriends greed, avarice and selfishness. It cannot survive in a system of good governance or a clean and just society.[26]

According to Nation Television (NTV) Uganda, there are many cases of MPs receiving gifts at the Ugandan national level.[27] By making laws and promoting policies that reflects the executive rather than public interests, these cases demonstrate how giving gifts undermines the right to political participation as enshrined in Article 38 of the 1995 Constitution. Additionally, it fosters public distrust and legislative impunity.[28]

From the global to the national level, corruptly gifting MPs poses a serious threat to democratic governance, transparency and political participation. While legal and institutional frameworks such as the Inspectorate of Government and the Anti-Corruption Division of the

25 African Union (11 July 2003) *African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption*, African Union, Maputo, Mozambique, available at https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36382-treaty-0028_ _african_union_convention_on_preventing_and_combating_corruption_e.pdf (visited 14 April 2026).

26 Sarfo-Kantankah (2018) at 242.

27 Nation Television Uganda (2025) *Chronology of Cash Handouts in Parliament*, available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=40Aihn_6Tkc (visited 16 July 2025).

28 Nation Television Uganda (2025).

High Court exist to prevent corruption, enforcement gaps, political culture, and lack of public accountability mechanisms remain persistent challenges, especially in Africa. Uganda's experience offers a critical case on how unchecked gifting practices can erode legislative integrity and violate the right to political participation.

2.1 The Anti-Corruption Legal Framework

Article 5 of the UNCAC enjoins preventive anticorruption policies and practices, where:

> Each State Party shall, in accordance with the fundamental principles of its legal system, develop and implement or maintain effective, coordinated anti-corruption policies that promote the participation of society and reflect the principles of the rule of law, proper management of public affairs and public property, integrity, transparency and accountability.

Similarly, Article 13 of the UNCAC underlines participation of society. It states that:

> Each State Party shall take appropriate measures, within its means and in accordance with fundamental principles of its domestic law, to promote the active participation of individuals and groups outside the public sector, such as civil society, non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations, in the prevention of and the fight against corruption, and to raise public awareness regarding the existence, causes and gravity of and the threat posed by corruption. This participation should be strengthened by such measures as: (a) Enhancing the transparency of and promoting the contribution of the public to decision-making processes; (b) Ensuring that the public has effective access to information; (c) Undertaking public information activities that contribute to non-tolerance of corruption, as well as public education programmes, including school and university curricula.

Articles 5, 6 and 7 of the UNCAC provide a global overview for regional frameworks such as the AUCPCC. The preamble of the AUCPCC recognises the "need to address the root causes of corruption on the continent". The Government of Uganda adopted the Uganda Anti-Corruption Act 6 of 2009, and the Zero-Tolerance to Corruption Policy (2019), with the goal "to eradicate corruption and its effect on Uganda's society".[29] Despite these frameworks, corruption remains one of the major obstacles that undermines Uganda's development. Although substantial efforts have been made to combat corruption in the country, the effects

29 Republic of Uganda (2019) *The Zero-Tolerance to Corruption Policy*, available at https://dei.go.ug/ZTCP.pdf (visited 15 April 2026).

of anti-corruption interventions remain modest at best, and corruption continues to impose wide-ranging costs on society.[30] Whereas Uganda is incorporating the above international and regional anti-corruption standards,[31] the practice is different. Some public officials, such as MPs in Uganda, receive unofficial payments that compromise their ability to make objective and independent decisions. This undermines the protection of the right to political participation and other rights.

2.2 The Legal Framework on the Right to Political Participation

The above global, regional and national context reinforces the legal framework for the right to political participation. This right is protected by international frameworks such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 21 (1), which states that, "everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives". Article 25 (a) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (1966), states that "[e]very citizen shall have the right and the opportunity, without any of the distinctions mentioned in article 2 and without unreasonable restrictions to take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives."[32] Article 13 (1) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966),[33] states that "education shall enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society". Similarly, in Article 13 (1) of the African (Banjul) Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981),[34] "every citizen shall have the right to participate freely in the government of his country, either directly or through freely chosen representatives in accordance with the

30 The Inspectorate of Government (2021) *Cost of Corruption in Uganda, Popular Version* at 1, available at https://www.igg.go.ug/media/files/publications/Cost_of_Corruption_Popular_Version.pdf (visited 15 April 2026).

31 Warioba JS (2009) "Opening Statement at the Regional Workshop on Strengthening Public Accountability in East Africa" in Tindifa S (2009) *Public Accountability and Good Governance in East Africa* Kituo cha Katiba: Eastern Africa Centre for Constitutional Development, Fountain Publishers at xii, available at https://www.kituochakatiba.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/Public%20Accountability%20and%20Good%20Governance%20in%20East%20Africa.pdf (visited 11 October 2025).

32 Adopted by General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI) of 16 December 1966, 23 March 1976.

33 Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI) of 16 December 1966, entry into force 3 January 1976.

34 Adopted 27 June 1981, OAU Doc. CAB/LEG/67/3 rev. 5, entry into force 21 October 1986.

provisions of the law". Likewise, Article 18 (1) (b) of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region Pact on Security, Stability and Development for the Great Lakes Region states that the member states undertake to

> entrench values, principles and norms on democracy, good governance, and respect for human rights, in the framework of the Programmes of Action for Democracy and Good Governance, which aims, in particular, to…Consolidate the democratization process by enhancing institutional capacity, by promoting political participation of all segments of society, and by developing and implementing communication and information strategies.[35]

At the national level, the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, 1995 (as amended), enjoins: "the State shall be based on democratic principles which empower and encourage the active participation of all citizens at all levels in their own governance".[36] Similarly, Article 38 (1) and (2) of the Constitution protects civic rights and activities. It equally succinctly states that "every Uganda citizen has the right to participate in the affairs of government, individually or through his or her representatives in accordance with law". It also states that "every Ugandan has a right to participate in peaceful activities to influence the policies of government through civic organisations". All these remain constitutional aspirations blurred by drawbacks such as corruption.

3. THE CASES OF GIVING GIFTS TO MPs

In this section, I present the key cases that highlight the giving of gifts to MPs. According to NTV Uganda,[37] it can be noted that:

> For years, lawmakers in Uganda have been accused of accepting bribes in exchange for their support on passing key legislation. These allegations have caused outrage and questions about the integrity of the country's democratic processes. In 2005 lawmakers were considering a constitutional amendment to remove term limits for the president. It seemed like a done deal with each MP receiving Uganda Shillings UGX5m to vote in favour

35 International Conference on the Great Lakes Region; The Pact on Security, Stability and Development for the Great Lakes Region, The Programmes of Action for Democracy and Good Governance, December 2006 Amended November 2012, available at https://icglr.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Pact_EN-Modified_2012.pdf (visited 16 April 2026).

36 The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, 1995, Objective II of the National Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy.

37 NTV Uganda (2025) at 28.

> of the amendment. This was a clear case of throwing money at a problem and paved the way for President Museveni to run for re-election. In 2011, opposition lawmakers received UGX20m for a Prosperity for All (government programme) mobilisation, two months before the end of their tenure in parliament. In 2017 the age limit debate also known as "*Togikwato*," literally meaning *do not touch,* stirred up the issue of gifting MPs when each received UGX29m for consultation on removing the presidential age cap.
>
> In 2020 MPs received UGX20m each as part of COVID-19 emergency fund facilitation and in 2022 they received UGX40m to pass a supplementary budget containing UGX77bn. The current exchange rate is UGX3.768 to one US dollar.
>
> In 2023, lawmakers were accused of receiving UGX100m each to pass a UGX5.2 trillion supplementary budget. On 9 May 2025, the Daily Monitor reported that a section of MPs had received UGX100m each. This was ahead of a contested debate on amending the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) Act to provide for the trial of civilians in the General Court Martial, an amendment targeting civilians linked to opposition political parties.[38]

Following from the above excerpt, cases of gifting MPs are further substantiated below:

3.1 The 2005 Constitution Amendment Case

According to Makara, in Uganda, presidential term limits have had a complex history. Initially, the 1995 Constitution stipulated a two-term limit for the president. However, this was removed in 2005 through a constitutional amendment, allowing the president to serve indefinitely. Makara further analysed the true nature of Museveni's regime by dissecting how he and his NRM have used the power of the presidency, state resources, patronage, and intimidation to ensure a favourable outcome at every electoral turn,[39] above all using giving gifts to MPs to entrench patronage.

In 2005, each MP received UGX5m to remove the presidential term limits, paving the way for President Museveni to contest again for the presidency in 2006. Unfortunately, the broad consensus reflected under Article 105 (2) of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda was not sufficiently protected from manipulation. In this process and event, just 10 years after the adoption of the Constitution, which was supposed to be a "durable" one,[40] Article 105 (2)

38 NTV Uganda (2025) at 28

39 Makara S (2020) "Presidential Term Limits in Uganda: Do Elections Provide an Avenue for Alternate Power Succession?" in Mangala J (eds) *The Politics of Challenging Presidential Term Limits in Africa*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan at 105.

40 Article 105 (2) of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, 1995.

was amended to allow for a presidency of indefinite duration. This was achieved through a "*quid pro quo* arrangement" in which the NRM government accepted a change from the so-called "Movement System" (in reality a *de facto* one-party state) to multipartyism, more or less in return for the removal of the two-term limit on the presidency.[41]

The process of constitution-making was expensive, long, and drawn out. It was originally planned to take two years, beginning in 1989. Instead, it took six years to produce a constitution. Some say the NRM extended the length of the process as a delaying tactic to give it more time in power. The entire constitution-making exercise cost US$20m, 42% of which came from the government of Uganda and 58% from foreign donors. The European Union, the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan, Denmark, and the United Nations Development Programme were among the largest contributors to the exercise.[42] In one of the lowest moments in parliamentary history, more than 70% of MPs received UGX5m (about US$3 000 at the prevalent rate) in return for voting for the amendment to Article 105 (2), although this was ostensibly an "allowance" meant to facilitate "consultation" with their constituents.[43] The voters who supported the change presumably received no such inducement, but they had to vote "yes" or "no" to the entire package of amendments that included the removal of presidential term limits and multipartyism.[44]

3.2 The 2011 Approval of Supplementary Budget Case

On 15 January 2011 the government wired UGX6.5bn into the accounts of 326 MPs including opposition members. Each MP received UGX20m. The money was paid "to monitor government programmes".[45] The money was paid 28 days before the general elections, a day

41 Tripp M (nd) *The Politics of Constitution-Making in Uganda* at 161, available at https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/Framing%20the%20State/Chapter6_Framing.pdf (visited 10 November 2025).

42 Tripp (nd).

43 Tripp (nd).

44 Businge K (2020) *Restraining the Imperial President: Term Limits and the Consolidation of Democracy in Uganda*, Nairobi: Katiba Institute at 5, available at, https://katibainstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Restraining-the-imperial-president-.pdf (visited 13 April 2026).

45 Mugerwa Y (24 July 2011) "48 Opposition MPs took Shs20M 'bribe' Sunday" *The Daily Monitor*, available at https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/48-opposition-mps-took-shs20m-bribe--1496950 (visited 15 April 2026).

after the ruling party forced through a controversial supplementary budget of UGX602bn. The leader of the opposition Nathan Nandala Mafabi maintained that:

> [T]he money was a bribe that dents the image of the Opposition. It was not a monitoring fund. It was a bribe because it came at a time when President Museveni was asking for UGX602bn in supplementary funding. This money was given during the campaigns and nothing was monitored. Some MPs even lost the polls, so what monitoring could they do?[46]

An unidentified official from the Office of the Auditor General (AG), told the media the UGX20m "bribe" was a matter under investigation. "The AG's office is pursuing the source of the money, the accountability from the MPs, and whether the expenditure in the middle of an election was justified." [47] The report from the AG was never made public.[48] In addition, a consortium of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) led by the Anti-Corruption Coalition of Uganda dragged the AG to court demanding the return of the money, and some MPs led by an MP from the Kitgum district were witnesses.[49] The case did not succeed and the money was never returned. The court ruled there was not sufficient evidence that receiving such money amounted to corruption or an abuse of public trust. The MPs kept the money.

3.3 The 2017 Constitution Amendment Case

In 2017 each MP received UGX29m for consultations to amend Article 102B of the Constitution to remove the age cap of 75 years to contest for the presidency, again allowing President Museveni to run. It can be noted that although the 2005 amendments had shown that the attempts to "tame" the presidency by constitutional means were futile, many still held out the hope that the president would respect the last check under the Constitution – the age limit – and step down upon turning 75. In a May 2012 interview with the local press, the president indicated unwillingness to serve beyond the age of 75. He is quoted to have said:

> That one I think we had ignored. We had not discussed it, but it can be discussed. But I think after the age of 75 there is some scientific idea there that maybe the vigour is not

46 Mugerwa (2011).
47 Mugerwa (2011).
48 Mugerwa (2011).
49 Mugerwa (2011).

> as much as before. So that one I would quarrel so much, I know there are some leaders who have been leading even beyond the age of 75 but I think if you want very active leaders, it is good to have ones below the age of 75.[50]

Five years later in an April 2017 interview with Al Jazeera he had become more guarded.[51] Thus, it was that in December 2017 that the Constitution was amended once again – removing the age restriction under Article 102 (b), in an apparent attempt to allay fears about the spectre of a life presidency.[52] This amendment created an opportunity for the president to contest for another term which limited citizens' opportunity to participate in a fair election, directly undermining their right to political participation.

3.4 The 2025 Coffee Bill and the Amendment of the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) Act Case

> Let him not go around in circles, the critical issue is the UGX100m given to MPs to thank them for passing the Coffee Bill and to easily pass the amendment to the UPDF Act. That's what he should respond to (Hon. Joel Basekezi Ssenyonyi (Leader of the opposition in parliament))[53]

From the above statement by Ssenyonyi, addressing the President on his gift to MPs, it can be noted that on 9 May 2025, the Daily Monitor reported: "It is alleged that a section of MPs between Monday 7th and Tuesday 8th May 2025, received a financial bail of UGX100m each."[54] Yet, this is in projection of the contested debate of amending the UPDF Act. The leader of the opposition reported that:

> We have been hearing about this move by the government to award MPs, especially from NRM and some opposition, basically to thank them for passing the controversial Coffee Bill and prepare ground for the upcoming controversial Coffee amendment.[55]

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50 Musa-Ladu I (12 May 2012*)* "I won't lead Uganda beyond 75, says Museveni" *The Daily Monitor*, available at https://www.monitor.co.ug/Magazines/PeoplePower/689844-1404384-qilox1z/index.html (visited 13 April 2026).

51 Vall M (nd) "Yoweri Museveni: A five time-elected dictator? Talk to Al Jazeera" *Al Jazeera*, available at https://youtu.be/hGQ6W4td72E (visited 13 April 2026).

52 Businge (2020) at 46.

53 Samilu B (11 April 2025) "Opposition challenges Museveni over Shs100m MPs cash scandal" *The Daily Monitor*, available at https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/opposition-challenges-museveni-over-shs100m-mps-cash-scandal-4999488 (visited 12 April 2025).

54 Samilu (2025)

55 Asiteza R (8 April 2025) "MPs pocket Shs100m each for 'good behavior' ahead of 2026" *The Daily*

Likewise, it can also be noted that:

> A section of MPs from the ruling National Resistance Movement as well as independents and opposition parties, received UGX100m each from President Yoweri Museveni as a reward for their "good behaviour" and to bolster support for government programmes ahead of the 2026 elections.[56]

4. GIVING GIFTS TO MPs AND THE RIGHT TO POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN UGANDA

Corruption, mostly the president's gifting to MPs, contributes to human rights violations, in this case the right to political participation e.g., if a corrupt government official takes a bribe to decide on both public and private matters. Here corruption directly violates an individual's human rights.[57] As argued by Navi Pillay:

> Corruption is an enormous obstacle to the realisation of all human rights – civil, political, economic, social, and cultural, as well as the right to development. Corruption violates the core human rights principles of transparency, accountability, non-discrimination, and meaningful participation in every aspect of the life of the community.[58]

According to Murray and Spalding, corruption is the "Achilles heel" of capitalism, and is widely exploited by certain government leaders as a means of both personal enrichment and maintaining autocratic control.[59] In Uganda, among the most controversial such practices is the giving of money or financial incentives to MPs which is often described as facilitation or consultation funds. These gifts or tokens of appreciation raise significant legal and ethical concerns. They also erode parliamentary independence and its ability to make impartial laws

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Express, available at https://dailyexpress.co.ug/2025/04/08/mps-pocket-shs100m-each-for-good-behavior-ahead-of-2026/ (visited 12 April 2025).

56 Asiteza (2025).

57 Ngugi JM (2010) "Making the Link Between Corruption and Human Rights: Promises and Perils" 104 P*roceedings of the American Society of International Law, Annual Meeting* 246–250 at 246.

58 Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (13 March 2013) *Opening statement by Navi Pillay, High Commissioner for Human Rights: Panel on The Negative Impact of Corruption on Human Rights,* available at https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2013/03/opening-statement-navi-pillay-high-commissioner-human-rights-panel (visited 5 July 2025).

59 Murray M & Spalding A (2015) *Freedom from Official Corruption as a Human Right,* Governance Studies at Brookings, at 4, available at https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/murray-and-spalding_v06.pdf (visited 28 March 2026).

and policies – given that the major purpose of these gifts is to "soften" parliament – that protect the right to political participation and other fundamental rights. In addition, the gifts bring happiness to both giver and recipient, and creates a closer bond between them.[60] Section 2 of the Anti-Corruption Act, 2009 states that:

> [C]orruption includes the solicitation or acceptance, directly or indirectly, by a public official, of any goods of monetary value, or benefits, such as a gift, favour, promise, advantage or any other form of gratification for himself or herself or for another person or entity, in exchange for any act or omission in the performance of his or her public functions.[61]

Corruptly giving gifts to MPs compromises their ability to represent the views and interests of their constituents thereby infringing citizens' rights to political participation. After receiving the gifts, the MPs that subscribe to the ruling party overwhelmingly, and without questioning, support the position of the president in parliament, while those in opposition (not all) who receive the gifts keep quiet during the debates on the contested matters, or elect to abscond during the discussion of such particular matters. This weakens the oversight role of parliament, including the protection of human rights.

Ngugi posits that it is generally held that weak human rights protection creates opportunities for corruption.[62] Corruption reduces the capacity of the government to respect, protect, and fulfil its human rights obligations. For example, a government with a corrupt court system cannot ensure access to justice to all. A corrupt police force cannot ensure security of persons and so forth.[63] Corruption reduces the levels of revenue available to the government, which directly reduces the capacity of the government to fund basic services, undermining the possibility of citizens meeting an adequate standard of living. Corruption in Uganda, like other countries, makes it impossible for the state to apply the maximum available resources progressively to realise economic and social rights,[64] and thwarts

60 Ogunyemi K (2023) "Gifting and Influence in the Public Sector" in Poff DC & Michalos AC (eds.) *Encyclopaedia of Business and Professional Ethics* Springer International Publishing, Cham, Switzerland: at 993-997.
61 The Anti-Corruption Act, 2009.
62 Ngugi (2010) at 246.
63 Ngugi (2010) at 246.
64 Ngugi (2010) at 246.

economic development, leading to widespread poverty and direct violations of economic and social rights, which also exacerbates other human rights violations.[65]

The right to political participation is a fundamental human right that enables individuals to take part in the governance of their country, either directly or through freely chosen representatives. This right is enshrined in several international human rights instruments including Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights[66] and Article 25 of the ICCPR. These legal frameworks assert that every citizen has the right to take part in public affairs, vote and be elected in genuine periodic elections and access public services on equal terms. Political participation includes the freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, which are essential for democratic governance.

Alford and Friedland define political participation as "those present or past activities by private citizens and private or public organisations and groups that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental structures and personnel, and the actions they take or do not take".[67] Political participation can also be defined as "behaviour influencing or attempting to influence the distribution of public goods".[68] On a theoretical level, a country's political culture shapes people's perception of corruption. Culture provides a lens for how people view the world, motives for human behaviour, criteria for evaluating actions and more generally, orientations to action.[69]

Gifting MPs compromises their ability to represent the views and interests of their constituents thereby infringing upon citizens' right to political participation. Under Article 38 of the 1995 Constitution of Uganda, every citizen has the right to take part in the governance of their country either directly or through freely chosen representatives. However, when MPs accept gifts, particularly from the executive, their loyalty may shift from the electorate to the

65 Ngugi (2010) at 246.

66 United Nations (1948) *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, available at, https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights (visited 18 June 2025).

67 Alford RR & Friedland R (1975) "Political Participation and Public Policy" 1(1) *Annual Review of Sociology* 429-479 at 430.

68 Booth JA (1979) "Political Participation in Latin America: Levels, Structure, Context, Concentration and Rationality" 14(3) Latin American Research Review29-60 at 31.

69 Anderson CJ & Tverdova YV (2003) "Corruption, Political Allegiances, and Attitudes Toward Government in Contemporary Democracies" 47(1) *American Journal of Political Science* 91 – 109 at 91.

giver, distorting the principle of representative democracy. Consequently, many vote knowing that they will not "benefit" from the act of voting. This explains the tendency to ask aspiring MPs to "give me something if you want me to vote for you". After all, they suspect that once the MPs have won, there may never be a chance to benefit in any other way; therefore, the voters literally demand to be given money by candidates, or else they will not vote for them.[70]

When gifts are used to influence parliamentary decisions, such as voting on constitutional amendments or passing controversial laws, the result is legislation that does not reflect the will of the people but rather that of the executive. A prominent example is the 2017 Age Limit Amendment when MPs reportedly received UGX29m. It directly contravened the people's political will, suppressing their right to political participation. The perception that the majority of MPs are easily influenced by gifts fosters widespread public disillusionment. Many citizens believe their voices and votes do not matter, especially when MPs act contrary to their mandates. This creates a belief that MPs serve their personal interests over those of their constituents, thus weakening citizens' motivation to engage in elections, petitions and public dialogue, which are among the core components of political participation.

Trust is essential for political participation because citizens are more likely to engage when they believe institutions are fair and accountable. Public trust in parliament, which is vital for political participation, is greatly undermined by the gift-giving culture. When MPs receive unexplained or unrealistic gifts especially during essential debates on critical national issues, parliament is perceived as compromised. This enhances a consistent decline in public confidence in parliament due to scandals related to financial inducements. Gifting MPs can deter citizen engagement in law-making and oversight processes. For instance, the cash bonanza in May 2025, when MPs were given UGX100m, while many citizens were struggling. The public backlash was immense, with CSOs and media houses accusing MPs of misappropriating crisis funds. This scandal diverted attention from political participation and undermined citizens' efforts to advocate for the rights of political prisoners and engage in constructive assemblies, thereby showing how corrupt gifting reduces inclusive governance.

70 Golooba-Mutebi F (2016) *The Cost of Parliamentary Politics in Uganda* at 8, available at https://costofpolitics.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Cost-of-Parliamentary-Politics-in-Uganda160920.pdf (visited 14 April 2026).

The law, particularly the Leadership Code Act Chapter 33, provides for a minimum standard of behaviour and conduct for leaders, requires leaders and public officers to declare their incomes, assets and liabilities, and establishes an effective enforcement mechanism. The Ombudsman (Inspector General of Government) has a duty to enforce the Leadership Code Act, and prosecute public officers before the Leadership Code Tribunal and Anti-Corruption Court. Yet, all these institutions remain silent when MPs receive such gifts, because the offeror is the appointing authority of the top officers in these public institutions. These officers can hardly rub their boss the wrong way. Whereas MPs are not above the law, and indeed many have been prosecuted for other crimes, the matter of gifting MPs appears to be above the institutions.

The CSOs that attempt to mobilise communities through the media (press briefs), demonstrations, and social media exposures around legislative issues face setbacks when MPs prioritise gifts over public opinion. In fact, the giving of gifts to MPs weakens their strength in advocacy and political participation. In 2021, during debates on the National Budget Framework, civil society proposals on health and education spending were largely ignored, while MPs pushed through allocations that included increased allowances for themselves. This environment discourages civic advocacy as citizens see their input being dismissed in favour of monetary incentives. This also leads to laws and policies that benefit a few at the expense of the citizenry, marginalising citizens as a result of poor decision-making.

The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals concerns corruption, with Goal 16 on achieving “Peaceful, Just and Inclusive societies” specifically calling on states to substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms. Corruption limits access to information and accountability, since gifting MPs often occurs in secrecy, making it difficult for citizens to access information about MPs’ financial dealings and possible conflicts of interest. It should be noted that in Uganda, MPs receive a consolidated monthly pay estimated between UGX20m and UGX35m that includes a taxable salary and substantial allowances for subsistence and mileage. Additionally, they receive a one-off vehicle grant of over UGX200m and various sitting committee allowances of about UGX50 000 per sitting. It should also be noted that citizens have never known the source of the funds used to gift and or appreciate the MPs. It is possible that such funds are fraudulently deducted from the

budgets of different government agencies or from the classified expenditure appropriated by the parliament to agencies such as the UPDF. In any case, citizens cannot access such information, nor participate in such decisions.

This situation is in total contravention of Article 41 of the Constitution, which guarantees citizens the right of access to information held by the state. Without transparency, citizens cannot make informed political choices, such as voting or petitioning, thus impairing their full participation in the governance of the country. Furthermore, this breeds apathy, leading to low voter turnout. There is an increased perception that MPs are more responsive to gifts than to public needs, which reduces voter enthusiasm. In Uganda's 2021 general elections, several constituencies recorded low voter turnout, which analysts partly attributed to growing public mistrust about the effectiveness of parliament.

Giving gifts to MPs violates international standards of participation. Uganda is a signatory to several international instruments that uphold political participation, such as the ICCPR and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance.[71] These instruments require that public officials serve the people's interests transparently and accountably. Gifting MPs undermines these obligations by creating a culture of transactional politics, where influence is purchased rather than earned through democratic dialogue. The practice in Uganda poses a serious threat to the realisation of the right to political participation, given that it impairs the decisions of parliament. It undermines democratic accountability, distorts representative governance and discourages citizen engagement. Addressing this issue requires not only stronger legal frameworks and enforcement mechanisms but also a shift in political culture toward transparency and integrity. As Uganda approaches future electoral cycles, it is crucial to critically examine how these practices influence governance and to implement reforms that protect the political rights of all citizens.

Corruption in Uganda's parliament, especially the practice of giving money to MPs, reflects a deep-seated problem, rooted in the dominance of the executive and weak accountability institutions. While Uganda is not alone in facing these challenges, comparative

71 African Union (2007) *African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance*, available at, https://au.int/en/treaties/african-charter-democracy-elections-and-governance (visited 25 April 2025).

experiences show that stronger enforcement, judicial independence and an engaged civil society can help reverse the trend. To protect the integrity of Uganda's democracy, political will must align with legal action and civic vigilance. The right to political participation is crucial for democracy, accountability and good governance. When citizens are empowered to participate in politics through civic education, they can influence decisions that affect their lives, hold leaders accountable and promote inclusive development. States have an obligation to protect and promote this right by ensuring free and fair elections, creating an enabling environment for civic engagement and removing barriers to participation for all citizens. As the United Nations Human Rights Committee affirms, genuine political participation is both a right in itself and an essential means of protecting other human rights.[72]

5. PATHWAYS TO PROTECTING THE RIGHT TO POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN UGANDA

The analysis of the pathways to protecting the right to political participation in Uganda was guided by the human rights-based approach (HRBA) to programming. There is no one definition of an HRBA.[73] Fundamentally, the approach is that development activities aim to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights codified in the international human rights legal framework.[74] The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights defined an HRBA as a "conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights".[75] The rights-based approach is an empowering approach that stems from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and suggests that citizens have justifiable

72 Committee on Civil and Political Rights (1996) *General Comment No. 25: The Right to Participate in Public Affairs, Voting Rights and the Right of Equal Access to Public Aervice (Art. 25),* CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.7,available at https://www.equalrightstrust.org/ertdocumentbank/general%20comment%2025.pdf (visited 17 July 2025).

73 Australian Council for International Development (2010) *Human Rights-Based Approaches to Development: Practice Note,* ACFID Development Practice Committee Meeting 19 May 2010 at 6, available at, https://acfid.asn.au/sites/site.acfid/files/resource_document/human-rights-based-approaches-to-development.pdf (visited 17 July 2025).

74 Australian Council for International Development (2010).

75 Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights 2006) *Frequently Asked Questions on a Human Rights-Based Approach to Development Cooperation,* HR/PUB/06/8 at 15, available at https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FAQen.pdf (visited 17 July 2025).

entitlements.[76] In this section, the HRBA principles of participation, accountability, non-discrimination, empowerment, and legality are used to develop pathways and lessons to protecting the right to political participation:

Participation: States, particularly the government of Uganda, have a duty to continuously build critical internal, sub-national and national cohesion through active and meaningful participation of stakeholders**.** This enables citizens to go beyond the narrow focus on members' economic interests and procedural justice through defence of the collective agreement, to underline political participation and other values ideal for the success of the society.[77]

Accountability: Parliament must continuously strive to provide accountability to its internal and external stakeholders on many facets that should include political participation. Given the enormous downward pressures on both membership numbers and bargaining power, citizens have to develop ways to amplify their capacity to attract, mobilise, and educate their fellow citizens to hold their MPs accountable. As reported: "We need clear accountability and transparency in how this money is being spent. It's crucial that Ugandans know where their money is going".[78] Olum, in his explanation of accountability and governance, suggests some measures in the fight against corruption through the promotion of transparency and accountability.[79] Similarly, though one may agree with Warioba that anti-corruption initiatives, transparency and accountability mechanisms must be homegrown,[80] there is a lot to learn from countries with very low levels of corruption, such as Denmark, Finland, New

76 Pawar M (2012) "The Adoption of a Rights-based Approach to Welfare in India" 28(1) *Journal of Comparative Social Welfare* 35-47 at 35.
77 Pawar (2012).
78 Asiteza (2025) at 58.
79 Olum Y, '(2009) "Public Accountability and Governance in East Africa" in Tindifa S (ed) *Public Accountability and Good Governance in East Africa* (Kituo Cha Katiba Occasional Publication No 4) Kampala: Fountain Publishers Kampala at 138.
80 Olum (2009) at 138.

Zealand, Seychelles or Botswana.[81] In 2023, Seychelles and Botswana had the lowest corruption levels on the African continent.[82]

Non-discrimination and inclusion: Pursuing inclusion and non-discrimination can also force parliament to tear down the self-imposed division between 'citizens' issues' and 'parliamentary issues', the former dealt with in citizens' collective bargaining and the latter in parliament's mandate.[83]

Empowerment: Citizens must understand that society in general and parliament in particular is replete with material and status hierarchies, which means that citizens are the vanguard for equality and equity. Citizens must approach this inequality and inequity with clear power, and their responsibility to use it in ways that defend a much broader community of interest – enhancing accountability.

Legality and or Normativity: The citizens ought to always be mindful of the fact that "the character of the government fundamentally shapes what happens in society, and what the citizens win at the bargaining table can easily be taken away through the legislative processes".[84] Citizens should always advocate and demand legal and policy regimes that deepen accountability by all organs and institutions of government, including parliament.

The above pathways are supported by Kjaerum, who avers that:

> Corruption often thrives in societies where there is a concentration of power in the executive branch and weak or non-existent checks and balances. It also thrives where there is poor transparency regarding executive decisions, restricted access to information, weak systems of oversight and enforcement, and a controlled media.[85]

81 Transparency International (2024) at 16.
82 Transparency International (2024) at 16.
83 Ross S & Savage L (2014) "Faculty Associations at the Crossroads" 11 *Academic Matters: OCUFA's Journal of Higher Education*, 11, Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations, Toronto.
84 Pawar (2012) at 84.
85 Kjaerum M (2017) *Anti-Corruption and Human Rights - How to Become Mutually Reinforcing?* Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law Roundtable 13-14 November 2017, Lund at 3, available at, https://rwi.lu.se/app/uploads/2018/02/Anti-Corruption-and-Human-Rights-RWI.pdf (visited 15 July 2025).

Related to the above, it is evident that there is an over-concentration of power in the executive in Uganda, and the checks to this power are weak. In order to overcome such limitations, "a human rights-based approach emphasising the role of principles, standards and mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights can be a valuable and complementary tool in the fight against corruption".[86] The HRBA underlines "a bottom-up approach to the fight against corruption to strengthen the popular support in this endeavour and empower citizens",[87] to demand accountability from parliament and the executive. Yet, from a practical perspective, much remains to be done to advance the application of human rights law standards and specifically the framework of an HRBA in countering corruption.

As earlier noted, and argued by Makara and Wang,[88] the regime continues to strategically employ both the law and gifting MPs. This "strategic gifting" continues to serve as a critical tool to contain threats to continued rule, to the effect of eroding the function of parliament, particularly rubberstamping all the positions of the executive. This impairs the oversight function of parliament and creates faded trust, leading to the adoption of laws and policies that severely undermine the right to political participation so that citizens do not hold the government accountable. Stated differently, the regime continues to be sustained by such strategic gifting and corrupt practices, and this creates a convoluted context for the same regime to fight corruption and protect human rights, such as the right to political participation.

6. CONCLUSION

Giving gifts to MPs, which is seen as corruption in Uganda, especially at the higher end of the political system, has increasingly drawn public scrutiny, while the struggle against official corruption is akin to fighting a mutating virus, or an insidious plague, as cases of corruption mutate and multiply. To cure the plague, the government must examine its causes from both

86 Murray & Spalding (2015) at 4.
87 Murray & Spalding (2015) at 4.
88 Makara & Wang (2022) at 14.

a theoretical and utilitarian perspective. Gifting MPs is corruption disguised as facilitation or appreciation. This influences their official duties, compromises public resources, and erodes democratic accountability. Such practices breach national laws, international standards and ethical expectations of public office. At global, continental, regional and national levels, they undermine the democratic principle of representative governance, undermine the participation of citizens in key decisions of government, and violate the right to participation. In Uganda, citizens are excluded from meaningful participation while legislative decisions are shaped by money and power rather than public interest. Addressing this issue requires political will from the president, an accountability culture from the cabinet, enhanced transparency, civic vigilance from citizens to protect the right to political participation, and upholding the independence of the legislature and its ability to make impartial laws and policies that protect the right to political participation and other fundamental rights. The HRBA provides a strategic framework of analysis for managing the plague of gifting MPs that directly and indirectly is costing taxpayers.