

Here is how to prepare for a medical emergency during the election period

By taking these comprehensive steps, you transform uncertainty into a clear, actionable plan, providing security and calm for your household during the election period.

BY GEOFFREY OYET OKWERA

Suzan Lamunu embodies the mixed emotions shared by many urban residents as the country edges closer to the January 15 2026, polling day. While she remains hopeful that the electoral process will unfold smoothly, uncertainty clouds her expectations.

Lamunu is already contemplating travelling out of Kampala, a precaution influenced by persistent speculation among colleagues and friends that key service, most notably internet access and mobile money platforms could face temporary disruptions.

Such concerns, rooted in past election experiences, have fuelled anxiety among city dwellers who rely heavily on digital services for communication, business, and access to essential needs.

With just days to the polls, the mood across the country remains one of a cautious expectation. There are some ongoing talks by some Ugandans, increasingly dominated by speculation about what the election period may bring, including fears of possible internet disruptions reminiscent of previous years.

But beyond political outcomes, a more pressing concern is emerging; will vital government services, particularly health care continue to function seamlessly during the election season?

Political commentator Thadeo Lubega observes that the current electioneering apprehension, has created fertile ground for speculation, rumours, and unverified claims, particularly on social media.

On the question of whether health services may be disrupted during the election period, Lubega remains cautiously confident that essential care will continue

STEPS TO SECURE YOUR HEALTH AND SAFETY SUPPLIES

It is good to have a fall-back position, in case there is need. Dr Edward Mugisha, a general practitioner says that preparing for medical needs requires taking decisive, practical steps now, before any potential unrest begins. "The core of your preparation involves three interconnected pillars; securing your health supplies, assembling a comprehensive emergency kit, and creating a robust communication and transport plan," he says. These actions are designed to ensure your safety and access to care even if standard services are disrupted.



Store your snacks in a cool, dark place and use a "first-in, first-out" system. When you buy new items, place them at the back so you use the older stock first.

ue uninterrupted.

Drawing from experience in previous poll years, he says there is little indication that health facilities will suspend operations, noting that the preservation of life has consistently remained a national priority.

Nevertheless, he urges Ugandans to remain calm and to refrain from acts of violence, warning that unrest not only threatens public safety but also undermines national development.

"Peaceful conduct by citizens plays a critical role in ensuring that essential services, including healthcare, continue to function normally. I believe that Uganda, as a nation, values life, and I expect health facilities to remain operational under normal circumstances," Lubega says.

He cautions, however, that while hospitals and clinics may stay open, disruptions to enabling services particularly internet connectivity could indi-

rectly affect health service delivery.

Lwanga explains that modern healthcare increasingly relies on digital platforms, with doctors often consulting colleagues online for specialist advice and referrals.

In an increasingly interconnected global environment, he argues, any interruption in internet services could limit such professional collaboration, potentially affecting the quality and timeliness of care.

Government assures

Sylvia Kirabo, a medical practitioner, downplays fears of election-related disruptions to healthcare services, insisting that the sector will continue operating as normal.

She says all government health workers are expected to report to their duty stations, as has been the case in previous election periods.

According to Kirabo, health workers

have not received any official communication directing the suspension of services on polling day, a clear indication that public health facilities will remain open to attend to patients. She adds that continuity of health care remains a core obligation of the health sector.

Emmanuel Ainebyoona, the Ministry of Health spokesperson, has assured the public that there will be no disruption of health services during the election period, stressing that healthcare is classified as an essential service.

"All public and private health facilities will remain fully operational during and after the elections. The mandate of health workers is to guarantee uninterrupted access to health services for all Ugandans at all times," Ainebyoona stated.

He directed members of the public to continue seeking medical attention from their nearest health facilities whenever necessary, confirming that health workers will be deployed and on duty across the country.

Stock supplies

"First, you must proactively manage your medications by ensuring you have at least a two-week supply of all prescription and essential over-the-counter drugs at home. This buffer is critical because pharmacies may become inaccessible," says Dr Mugisha.

Visit your doctor or clinic immediately to request refills for this extended period. Once secured, store medicines properly in their original containers and take clear photographs of all prescription labels. These photos provide vital information for healthcare workers in an emergency if you are separated from your physical medications.

"Second, prepare a dedicated emergency kit that goes beyond a standard first-aid box. This kit should enable you to shelter safely at home for up to 72 hours. In addition to bandages and antiseptics, include specialised items such as a tourniquet and hemostatic gauze for serious bleeding, and saline solution or a mixture of water and liquid antacid to soothe the skin and eyes exposed to tear gas," he says.

Your kit must also contain practical survival items, a minimum of four litres of water per person per day, ready-to-eat food, a solar-powered power bank, a battery-operated radio, and a reserve of cash in small denomination notes to cover expenses if banking services are unavailable.

Communication and transport plan

Develop a detailed plan for communication and transport, as these systems are most likely to fail during civil unrest.

Save all critical contact numbers, for your preferred hospital, a trusted local clinic, and reliable private transport drivers, directly into your phone's contacts and also write them on a physical piece of paper.

Do not rely on having internet access to find them. Furthermore, identify in advance the physical location and safest route to your chosen medical facility. Map out a primary and an alternative back-up route that avoids areas where protests or gatherings are likely to occur.

Formalise a support network by designating a family member or neighbour as your emergency check-in contact.

Share your entire preparedness plan with this person, including your medication list, chosen hospital, and evacuation routes.

Establish a simple daily check-in protocol, such as a pre-agreed text message; if you fail to check in or send a distress signal, your contact will know to try to reach you or alert authorities on your behalf.

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