Why the north rallied behind presidential bid of Museveni

UGANDA'S BOLD VOICE

Mao's open support and mobilisation of the Acholi to vote for President Museveni explains the massive win that the NRM candidate was able to secure in the Sub-region.

BY TOBBIAS JOLLY OWINY



Democratic Party leader Norbert Mao (left) and President Museveni after the former swore in as Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs at State House on July 27, 2022. PHOTO/ PPU

If he is to be held by his word, for the first time, Democratic Party (DP) president Norbert Mao last week voted for the National Resistance Movement (NRM) candidate and incumbent President Museveni in a presidential poll.

On December 30, 2025, Mao, a three-time presidential candidate on the DP ticket, who said he had never voted for Museveni, explained that it was an opportunity to cast his vote in favour of the NRM candidate to grant him one more chance to fulfil all the political pledges he made in the Acholi Sub-region.

"I have never voted for Museveni. However, this time round I will give him my vote," he told his supporters while explaining that he is willing to cast his vote in Museveni's favour because he (Museveni) owes a lot of 'debts' to the Acholi people.

Mao said by voting for NRM, the Acholi people would be guaranteed their livestock compensation and other war reparation packages with Museveni in office.

"It is not only cattle that need to be compensated. People in northern Uganda lost a lot of property during the

Mao led the upturn by beating Fr Charles Onen, who won the Laroo-Pece Division as an Independent candidate in 2021. The DP leader secured 7,359 against Fr Onen's 5,562 votes. The other DP winners from Acholi Sub-region are Peter Okot (Tochi County), Patrick Okello Onguti (Aswa County), Geoffrey Charles Okello (Nwoya East), and Geoffrey Opiyo (Nwoya County).

This makes DP by far the biggest Opposition party in the Acholi Sub-region, previously regarded as a stronghold for the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC).

Whereas Onguti garnered 13,889 votes to defeat NRM's Wokorach, who got 9.781votes in Aswa County, Geoffrey Charles Okello (4,249 votes) beat NRM's Lilly Adong, who polled 3,624 votes in the Nwoya East race. Denis Geoffrey Opiyo won with 5,044 votes, beating NRM's Tony Awany with a 22-vote margin after he managed 5,022 votes for the Nwoya County MP race.

Mao's open support and mobilisation of the Acholi to vote for President Museveni explains the massive win that the NRM candidate was able to secure in the Sub-region.

In the 2021 election, President Museveni secured 23,683 (47 percent) of the votes in Gulu District against Mao's 11,223 (22.3 percent) of the voters. National Unity Platform's (NUP) Robert Kyagulanyi polled third with 9,764 (19.41 percent) out of the 54,088 voters that turned up from the total 141,423 registered voters in the district.

Museveni also won northern Uganda with 1,219,352 votes, translating into 68.26 percent, with Kyagulanyi (NUP) placing second with 389,584 votes (21.81 percent). Patrick Amuriat Oboi of the FDC (47,912) and Norbert Mao (40,688) finished third and fourth.

This was a significant drop in stock for Mao who, in securing a 1.8 percent (148,170 votes) share nationwide during the 2011 presidential poll, put up a strong showing in his backyard.

Specifically, he mustered 82,781 votes (6.24 percent) in northern Uganda, scoring highest in Gulu District (44.29 percent) where Museveni (26.85 percent) played second fiddle.

However, in the neighbouring Kitgum District, Museveni floored Mao with 38.93 percent (17,965 votes) against the latter's 8.04 percent (3,711 votes).

Changes

More than half of the 21,681,491 voters stayed away from the polling stations last week, with only 11.36 million voters casting their ballot, representing

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