

Mr Haruna Kyeyune Kasolo, the vice chairperson - Central in the NRM Central Executive Committee (third right), introduces party members and leaders to NRM chairperson and presidential flagbearer Museveni ahead of the latter's campaigns in Kalangala District on December 20,2025. PHOTO/PPU

Why Museveni secured victory in Buvuma, Kalangala islands

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NRM leaders in the two island districts attribute the improved performance to renewed grassroots mobilisation and reconciliation within the ruling party.

BY MONITOR TEAM

The outcome of the January 15 presidential election in the two island districts of Kalangala and Buvuma has revealed a notable shift in voting patterns, with incumbent Museveni reclaiming ground he lost in the 2021 polls.

On January 16, the Kalangala District Returning Officer, Mr Ronald Agaba, declared Mr Museveni of the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) party winner of the presidential vote in the district after securing 9,823 votes (50.63 percent) out of 20,003 total ballots cast.

His closest challenger, Mr Robert Kyagulanyi, aka Bobi Wine of the National Unity Platform (NUP), garnered 9,278 votes (47.82 percent).

In the neighbouring Buvuma island district, Mr Museveni got 12,668 votes (55.02 percent), while Mr Kyagulanyi garnered 9,889 votes (42.95 percent).

The results marked a sharp turnaround from the 2021 election, when Mr Kyagulanyi dominated the island district with 13,121 votes (70 percent) against Mr Museveni's 5,275 votes (28.15 percent) from more than 30,000 voters.

In Buvuma, it was the same pattern, NRM performed poorly with its candidate garnering 6,814 votes (32.36 percent) against Mr Kyagulanyi's 13,572 votes (64.45 percent).

Mr Sunday Gerald Kayita, the Kalangala District NRM chairperson, said Mr Museveni's improved performance is a result of renewed grassroots mobilisation and reconciliation within the ruling party.

"Winning came after we managed to reach every NRM member in all the 97 villages in Kalangala District, reviving their hopes and hearts to continue fighting for the glory of NRM and President Museveni," Mr Kayita said.

He added that party leaders focused on reminding residents of government interventions and addressing their long-standing grievances.

"We clearly explained what the NRM government has done for Kalangala and answered most of the pressing questions residents had, like dwindling fish stocks and harassment meted out by soldiers on the lake. That helped to restore the trust they had lost," he said.

Mr Kayita also revealed that the party avoided divisive primaries by encouraging internal negotiations among aspirants, resulting in consensus candidates for most positions.

"Most critical positions emerged unopposed, which created harmony within the party. Candidates spent more time mobilising instead of resolving internal conflicts," he said.

He further noted that the NRM's strong showing in youth elections — where the party reportedly secured 82 percent of the positions — energised young voters in the district.

"That victory restored our confidence that NRM is still loved in Kalangala. We then empowered the youth to mobilise their fellow youth to support President Museveni," he said.

The chairperson of NRM Buganda Caucus and Buvuma Member of Parliament, Mr Hon Robert Migadde, said the party undertook a deliberate review of why it had lost in most of the districts in Buganda Sub-region during the 2021 General Election.

"As a party, we kept asking ourselves why NRM was not liked in Buganda despite the many government programmes we have rolled out. Before starting our campaign trail, we decided to first go to Mengo, the seat of Buganda Kingdom, to seek blessings, and I think this helped us a lot," he stated.

After visiting Mengo, Mr Migadde said NRM leaders focused on understanding community-specific challenges across the sub-region, particularly land wrangles and service delivery gaps.

"In every area, we discovered unique problems. For example, in Mubende District, there was an issue of a hospital gate that was closed during Covid-19 period and, five years later, it was still closed," he said, explaining that when NRM leaders visited the area, locals complained that they were being inconvenienced because the hospital gate was closed and as result, experience unnecessary traffic.

Mr Migadde said the NRM leaders later talked to the hospital administration and the gate was reopened.

Other complaints the locals raised were related to the NRM internal elections held last year.

"In some areas, we had challenges deciding who to work with between flag bearers and MPs who had lost in the primaries. Some of those we sidelined accused us of fighting them, but we clearly explained to them that we are not their enemies, but we are supporting only official flag bearers," Mr Migadde stated.

He also explained that in their campaign messages, NRM leaders deliberately avoided confrontational politics and never attacked National Unity Platform (NUP) supporters, because the party enjoys strong support in Buganda.

"We even welcomed NUP supporters at our rallies, which was not the case at their rallies. I think this gave confidence to the voters that NRM is better than the rest for continuity" Mr Migadde noted.

Kalangala NRM District spokesperson Elly Ntegge Wasajja said the party's campaign strategy emphasised service delivery and also called for popularising government projects.

"Government has done a lot — from oil palm projects to improved water transport, electricity, clean water supply and better roads," Mr Ntegge said.

He added: "Once islanders were reminded of these achievements, their trust in NRM to deliver more grew."

He added that the party established 30-member mobilisation committees in all 95 villages, 17 parishes and seven sub-counties, each tasked with recruiting at least 10 new supporters in the district.

In the run-up to the elections, the office of the Resident District Commissioner (RDC) in both districts also engaged fishing communities at various landing sites.

Mr Fred Badda, the Kalangala RDC, said the government's leniency towards fishermen influenced their decision to back Mr Museveni.

"We know those involved in illegal fishing, but the government has been soft, allowing time for fishermen to raise money to buy recommended fishing gear," Mr Badda said.

The NRM also benefited from defections and cooperation from some Opposition figures, including Kalangala District speaker Richard Katumba and Mugoye Sub-county councillor Herman Galibe, who openly campaigned alongside the ruling party candidates.

NRM leaders said they also avoided repeating mistakes from 2021, when Mr Kyagulanyi was blocked from campaigning in parts of Kalangala — a move they believe annoyed voters.

Mr Meddi Kayondo, an observer in Kalangala, said Mr Museveni appeared to have reflected on his poor showing in the district during the previous election.

"He [Museveni] went back and reflected on why he did poorly in 2021 and corrected those mistakes, including revisiting promises that had not been fulfilled," Mr Kayondo explained.

He cited renewed assurances on key infrastructure projects such as the Kyamuswa ferry and the Bugoma-Mujlabana roadworks, which he said had revived hope among islanders.

"Mobilisation in landing sites was relatively easy due to population concentration. People here are usually in one place, which makes mobilisation easier for the ruling party," Mr Kayondo said.

What voters say

Ms Sylvia Namono, a farmer from Mweena Village, said the Parish Development Model (PDM) poverty alleviation programme has transformed her livelihood. She cited this as reason for support for NRM.

"I voted for Museveni because he has helped us women come out of poverty through PDM... From the Shs1 million I received, I started farming, which now sustains my family. My future is brighter," she said.

Mr Fred Tushabomwe, a boda boda rider, cited peace and infrastructure development as the two factors that influenced him to vote for Mr Museveni.

"Today, many homes here have electricity, something we never had before. We used to have only one ferry, but now there are several of them. Roads are better, and movement has improved," he said.

The dissolution of all landing site committees and restructuring the Fisheries Protection Unit (FPU) comprising soldiers under the Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces (UPDF), seems to have worked to Mr Museveni's advantage. In a December 26, 2025 letter, the acting Director of Defence Public Information, Col Chris Magezi, announced that the dissolved committees will be replaced by new ones composed of representatives of indigenous fishermen and investors.

MP RACES IN KALANGALA AND BUVUMA DISTRICTS

Kalangala District has 64 inhabited islands with a population of 74,411 people, while Buvuma District, which comprises 52 islands, has a population of 118,956 people. NRM flag bearers managed to win back the two constituencies of Kyamuswa and Bujjumba in Kalangala, which were in the hands of Opposition and also snatched the Buvuma District Woman MP seat from NUP's Susan Nakazibа, as well as retaining the Buvuma County seat currently occupied by Mr Robert Migadde.

Compiled by Al Mahdi Ssenkabirwa, David Sekayinga & Godfrey Masiko