



CROWDSOURCING AS A TOOL FOR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION? - THE CASE OF UGANDAWATCH

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Abstract

Uganda has democratic deficits where demand for democracy exceeds its supply. As a consequence it is argued that a segment of Ugandans might participate and honour the freedom to speak out, assemble, and associate given new opportunities outside the traditional political channels. With expanded mobile coverage and access to mobile devices and services in mind, and using the concept of open crowdsourcing, the platform UgandaWatch was launched prior to the 2011 general elections with the intention to meet the demand, to offer increased equality of political participation, and to advance efforts toward increased citizen engagement in Uganda. From a community informatics point of view, the study examined how and under what conditions access to ICT tools (mobile devices, networks, and a crowdsourcing platform) can be made usable and useful for people and communities for increased political participation in a given context. By combining the collection and analysis of quantitative (SMS-survey) and qualitative data (focus groups) through a mixed-method approach, this study answers the questions, *What are the key factors that influence users' willingness to use mobile phones and crowdsourcing platforms as a channel for political participation?*, and *What concerns do users have with respect to using mobile phones and crowdsourcing platforms in the participation process?* The study shows that users participated because they hoped it would bring real change to Uganda's electoral and political landscape, that it was a convenient channel to use (quick and easy) and that confidentiality was assured. The user concerns relate to costs, trust, and safety. Crowdsourcing offers an alternative channel and may substitute or supplement traditional means of political participation. It can increase participation in some groups, including among those who normally do not participate—something that increases equality of political participation in a positive direction.

Keywords: crowdsourcing, SMS, mobile phone, community informatics, political participation, UgandaWatch

1. Introduction

Uganda has undergone dramatic political transformation since the National Resistance Movement (NRM) government led by President Museveni took power in 1986. There has been a transition to multiparty (or rather one-party dominant with an emergent but

divided opposition [Tangri and Mwenda 2010]), political power has been decentralised (although there has been some recent recentralisation [Ssonko 2013]), and regular general elections are held every fifth year (even though the credibility of the whole electoral process is disputed [Tangri and Mwenda 2013]). There has been a steady decline in voices and accountability in Uganda since the beginning of the millennium [HRW 2011, Sida 2009]. Indeed, Human Rights Watch observes in their World Report 2011, that “[f]reedoms of assembly and expression in Uganda have come under attack in 2010, the pressure intensifying in advance of presidential and parliamentary elections scheduled for February 2011” [HRW 2011, p. 185].

Due to the debateable political transformation, many Ugandans have become disappointed with the democratic development in their country [Price et al. 2013]. Citizens have become sceptical about their ability to impact political change as seen in a decline in voter turnout (i.e. percentage of registered voters who actually voted) over the past decade, dropping from 70% in 2001 elections to 59% in 2011 [IDEA 2013]. Paradoxically, according to Afrobarometer survey data, popular demand for democracy¹ has increased from 36% in 2000 to 63% in 2012 [Mattes et al. 2010; Bratton and Houessou 2014]. As popular demand for democracy clearly exceeds the amount of democracy that political elites are willing or able to supply in Uganda, a deficit of democracy is produced [Bratton and Houessou 2014]. Due to the democratic deficit, it is argued that the ruling elites in Uganda can expect to encounter sustained popular pressure for further democratisation [Bratton and Houessou 2014], and that Ugandans citizens might explore alternative participation activities and take advantage of new channels for political participation² to exercise their democratic rights [Price et al. 2013].

One such new channel is information and communication technology (ICT), including mobile phones and crowdsourcing platforms, which is increasingly viewed as a potential tool for increasing both conventional and unconventional political participation, by changing its modalities, and being more inclusive than existing traditional political communication channels [Grossman et al. 2013; Hellström 2011; Hermanns 2008; Monterde and Postill 2014; Mora 2014; Poblet 2011; Van Belle and Cupido 2013]. There are many quantitative studies that on a macro-level show a correlation between ICT use and civic and political engagement. A meta-analysis of 38 such studies suggests that the effect of Internet use on engagement at the individual level is positive [Boulianne 2009]. Research on the impact of mobile phones on political participation is, however, anecdotal [Smith et al. 2011], and mainly deals with the informal use of mobile devices and networks; generic, digitally connected, unstructured crowds that demonstrate the potential in mobiles as they encourage unconventional participation, amplifies human action, and trigger various effects (called “smart mobs” [Rheingold 2002], “flash mobs” [Wasik 2008], and “swarm intelligence” [Hardt and Negri 2004]). In sub-Saharan Africa, there are few examples of direct political action facilitated by mobile devices and networks with a few

¹ A measure that “combines the responses of those who say they support democracy as the best system of government, and those who explicitly reject three authoritarian alternatives: military rule, one-party rule, and strongman presidential rule” [Mattes et al. 2010].

² The term political participation has no universally accepted definition but is often referred to as “political engagement” or “public involvement in decision making”. The type of political participation that is referred to in this study is any activity that shapes, affects, or involves the political sphere (i.e. voting in elections, raising public awareness, protesting, signing petitions, advocacy, monitoring political processes) where citizens contribute to a process but do not necessarily share power (see [Pateman 1970] and her notion of partial participation).

exceptions: the struggle during the evictions in Kibera in Nairobi Kenya in 2007, the Save Mabira Forest campaign in Uganda in 2007, and price hike riots in Maputo, Mozambique in 2010 [Hellström 2011].

Research on such initiatives and ICT tools specifically designed to alter social contexts, i.e. studies concerning active innovation [Heeks 2008] and embedded directionality [Donner 2010] in political participation, is even less common. Interventions like Huduma [Bott and Young 2012], BungeSMS [Hellström and Tedre, forthcoming] and a majority of the Crowdmapp implementations [Bailard et al. 2012], i.e. projects with the objective to meet specific development goals and which are largely donor driven, show limited impact and often fail to meet some or all of their development objectives [Dodson et al 2012; Heeks 2008; Uimonen and Hellström, forthcoming]. Despite high failure rates, there are interventions designed to support more conventional participation that show positive results. A study by Grossman et al. [2013] on a mobile technology intervention designed for constituencies and members of parliament in Uganda concludes “that opening a new low cost IT communication channel can flatten political access, as uptake among marginalized populations outpaces that by non-marginalized groups” [Grossman et al. 2013, p.37]. This is also contrary to studies indicating that ICT benefits the already privileged as they show that “ICT leads to significant flattening: a greater share of marginalized populations use this channel compared to existing political communication channels” [Grossman et al. 2013, p.1].

2. Crowdsourcing

Crowdsourcing is yet another ICT tool that is used to increase political participation. Crowdsourcing enables distributed and decentralised interaction [Donner 2010] and involves outsourcing a specific task in the form of a call to a community or to an undefined group of people, i.e. a crowd [Howe 2006]. In a wider research context, crowdsourcing allows ordinary citizens to share observations during natural disasters, report election irregularities, violence, monitor government, etc., via online and mobile technology (e.g. SMS, voice, instant messages, Twitter, email) to a centralised server. The data collection can either be carried out through *open* crowdsourcing (i.e. more informal, citizen generated data where participation is non-discriminatory and, in principle, anyone is allowed to submit reports), through *bounded* crowdsourcing (i.e. a more systematic and organised method that trained volunteers, workers or observers undertake), or from a combination of both. Crowdsourcing as a tactic has become an option for utilising collective power addressing certain challenges, and has become a buzzword in the development and humanitarian sector [Poblet 2011]. It was made popular in development circles through the open source Ushahidi platform first used for post-election monitoring of violent acts in Kenya 2007-2008 [Hellström 2010].

Despite widespread support for crowdsourcing projects among donor agencies, non-governmental organisations, and international media, its real impact on development and democracy, just like other types of ICT tools, is under debate among certain practitioners and scholars. When discussing the concept of distributed and decentralised interaction, Donner states, “[t]he patterns of use associated with these ‘at scale’ platforms in resource-constrained settings will have tremendous implications for whether and how poor communities will participate in the informational society” [Donner 2010, p.11]. Not only are the general user experiences important to understand, but also the perceived limitations of using crowdsourcing for political participation.

In their overview of the crowdsourcing phenomenon, Bott and Young conclude that, “the core risks and challenges arise around the concept of trust” [Bott and Young 2012, p.55]. They mean that lack of trust in the system may result in an inactive crowd. The potential user may also find the initiative too static or centrally controlled, and do not see the benefit in participating, and therefore, lack incentives to do so [Bott and Young 2012]. Other risks such as information overload caused by unverified data, inaccurate information, and threats to citizens’ privacy and security when reporting have also been identified [Joyce 2010; Currión 2010; Morozov 2011; Poblet 2011]. Crowdsourcing and its side effects “need to be addressed to avoid the consequences of technological misuse and subsequent risks for citizens” [Poblet 2011, p.215]. The risks associated with crowdsourcing are perhaps most pronounced when the crowd is asked to share sensitive information that can be used to criticise the government, such as election or service delivery monitoring. Using crowdsourced data for monitoring elections can also be problematic because there might be incentives for certain citizens to manipulate data, and the accuracy of crowdsourced data is very hard to verify [Morozov 2011].

1.1. Research problem

Despite the perceived potential in using ICT to increase political participation and change its modalities, the use of existing mobile active innovations and services is not widespread [Hellström and Tedre, forthcoming; Van Belle and Cupido 2013]. While numerous similar systems have been employed elsewhere to increase political participation, the crowdsourcing field is still in its infancy [Powell et al. 2012], and little research has been done about whether or why ICT is effective in supporting political participation, let alone how users of the platforms perceive the interventions. From a review of the literature, this study connects how communities make use of mobile phones and a crowdsourcing platform for crowd engagement and participation. In line with community informatics, this research study examines how and under what conditions access to ICT tools (mobile devices, networks and open crowdsourcing) can be made usable and useful for people and communities for increased political participation in a given context. The study takes its point of departure in the current debate among ICT4D practitioners and researchers on whether technology affects inclusion, interaction and participation, and if it does, in what way. The results of this study will shed light on factors and elements that influence effective use of mobile-enabled crowdsourcing, and thereby, deepen our understanding of whether, how, when and why it can be effective. The main questions were: a) *What are the key factors that influence users’ willingness to use mobile phones and crowdsourcing platforms as a communication channel for political participation?* b) *What concerns do users have with respect to using mobile phones and crowdsourcing platforms in the participation process?*

2.1. Case of analysis

To answer these questions, the case of UgandaWatch – an open crowdsourcing platform for citizen reporting through SMS on electoral irregularities – was chosen for analysis. The project was initiated by the National Democratic Institute (NDI, an international non-governmental organisation³) in partnership with DEMGroup (a

³ NDI, with headquarters in Washington, DC, is a non-profit, nonpartisan, non-governmental organisation that has worked with local partners in 125 countries and territories, providing support to citizens, political and civic leaders advancing democracy, practices and institutions.

coalition of four civil society organisations in Uganda⁴) before the February 2011 elections.

Given that the vast majority of Ugandan adults had access to at least simple mobile phones at the time [World Bank 2014], SMS technology was, despite the challenges associated with it, chosen as the preferred communication channel in order to assure widespread participation. Widespread participation was also the purpose of the national marketing campaign that preceded UgandaWatch, where radio jingles, newspaper advertisements, T-shirts and flyers were used to promote UgandaWatch and the dedicated shortcode 6090. Despite the extensive, nationwide marketing campaign and a relatively generous marketing budget, UgandaWatch had a problem reaching out. An earlier study [Hellström and Karefelt 2012] indicates that almost half of a representative sample of Ugandan mobile phone users had never heard about the shortcode 6090 or UgandaWatch.

Citizens were encouraged to observe and report irregularities using SMS indicating what, when and where the incident happened. In total, more than 10,000 reports were sent from citizens all over the country, covering various issues such as voter buying, registration hiccups, inappropriate campaign conduct, cases of violence, or just general complaints or positive feedback. The reports were later manually verified, geotagged, categorised and published on a public website by a team of “taggers” volunteering for DEMGroup. What made the initiative unique compared to many other open and/or bounded election monitoring crowdsourcing initiatives in sub-Saharan African countries⁵ was that it covered the whole electoral process from the starting point of voter registration in June 2010, to the general elections in February 2011, as well as post-election activities in March and April 2011. UgandaWatch was announced in a press release with a lot of enthusiasm and hope: “For the first time, citizens have the ability to report any problems they face with the election process in a simple and easy way – by sending an SMS to us on 6090. [...] It’s about getting citizens to be active and participating in democracy” [DEMGroup 2010].

By providing new ways and methods of participation in the electoral process, the rationale was to increase equality of political participation and advance efforts toward increased citizen engagement in Uganda. From a community informatics research point of view, this is imperative since the UgandaWatch platform offered a unique opportunity to understand a particular aspect of social change – how new groups and communities of users have (or have not) been empowered to become active political participants through their access and “effective use” of mobile devices and networks [Gurstein 2007].

3. Methodology

The UgandaWatch user perspective guided the data collection methods of this study. Data was collected from two different sources:

- 1) Quantitative data was collected from an SMS questionnaire that was sent to a random sample of 1,800 users of UgandaWatch resulting in a total of 2,543

⁴ DEMGroup was a coalition of four civil society organisations funded by the donor program Deepening Democracy Programme with technical assistance from the American organisation, National Democratic Institute, NDI.

⁵ Election monitoring using open and/or bounded crowdsourcing has taken place in Benin (2011), Burundi (2010), Kenya (2010, 2013), Ghana (2012), Nigeria (2011), Sudan (2010), and Zimbabwe (2008).

relevant answers from 486 unique phone numbers (27% response rate). Reminders as well as incentives were used to increase response rates.

- 2) Qualitative data was collected from 30 fully anonymous focus group discussions with users of UgandaWatch consisting of between three to eleven participants in each group.

3.1. SMS survey

The population from which the samples were drawn was the UgandaWatch dataset that included all SMS sent to the platform (more than 10,000 SMS) during the election period and consisted of 4,311 unique phone numbers. To diversify the sample, 1,800 users were contacted at random from the UgandaWatch population whereof 486 replied, which yielded 2,543 usable answers (see Table 1). 87% were male and 13% were female, 43% were under 25 years old. Even though the Ugandan population is predominantly young (69% is under the age of 25 [UBOS 2014]), this sample does not represent the Ugandan population as a whole given that 87% of the respondents indicated they were men – but it does represent the users of UgandaWatch. Why the majority of users are men is further discussed under Further research.

SMS questionnaire was selected as the survey medium in order to reach the actual users of the platform since SMS was the medium used to participate in the initiative in the first place. Phone numbers were therefore the only way to access actual users directly and discretely. Each question was sent in a separate SMS and once answered, the server sent out the subsequent question, meaning that it was not possible to miss or skip a question or ignore the alternatives given. A respondent could give multiple replies to one question sending several SMS. Further, if the reply did not follow the said format⁶ no additional question was sent out (see Appendix 1 for more information). Conversely, this meant that the number of respondents dropped with every question, which must be considered normal. The survey was tested on a group of Ugandans with different socio-economic backgrounds and modified thereafter before sent out to the sample.

In addition to reminders sent out a week after the initial message to all numbers who did not start the questionnaire, the survey was also sent out to a completely new batch of 300 numbers including an incentive to win 20,000 Ugandan shillings (US \$8) worth of airtime for participating in the survey. The survey completion rate, i.e. when a unique number had answered all the questions, was substantially higher in the sample that was offered an incentive.

An interesting point worth mentioning is that some of the responses came from new phone numbers that were never on the original send list (the sample). The rationale for including data from these numbers basically boils down to how mobile phones are being used in Uganda. Multiple SIM cards and handset ownership, shared usage practices, and unreliable mobile networks and electricity supplies [Hellström 2010] are all reasons that can explain the occurrence of numbers not part of the original sample. There is, of course, a risk that non-users of UgandaWatch found out about the survey (and incentive) and replied to it, or that individuals in the original sample used all their different SIM cards to answer the survey multiple times. This

⁶ The number of people that did not get through because of “wrong” replies (i.e. text instead of numbers) was not very high. Some “wrong” replies were later corrected from text into their corresponding numerical answer.

was a risk considered worth taking and is an inherent shortcoming of using SMS as a way to gather data.

Data collected was captured in a table-structured format and then exported to SPSS (version 22) for data analysis. The processed data was analysed with descriptive statistics.

Question	Total	Primary case	Replies
1	606	462	431 (18 “No”)
2	911	344	578
3	247	212	223
4	233	205	206
5	238	201	238
6	251	205	235
7	247	190	190
8	172	151	151
9	177	152	152
10	205	139	139

Table 1. Number of respondents and replies of the SMS survey. Total includes duplicate cases as well as primary cases, i.e. a unique number that is here treated as one respondent.

A part of this quantitative dataset was also used in [Hellström and Karefelt 2012] but it left a number of questions unanswered as a result of the restraints in only using SMS as a way to gather data (including the 160 character limitation, the keyword format, problem of establishing a correlation between answer and sample, difficulties controlling the sample size, hard to follow up and clarify, etc.). In order to supplement the data from the SMS survey, a qualitative data collection method in the form of focus groups was therefore added.

3.2. Focus groups

Respondents to the SMS questionnaire were further requested to participate in focus groups, and some individuals who initially participated in the SMS survey agreed to meet face-to-face. This resulted in 30 focus groups where participants were volunteers identified by the SMS questionnaire.

Research assistants carried out the focus group discussions and out of the 30 discussions completed, eight were carried out in the northern region of Uganda, seven in eastern, eight in central, and seven in western. Altogether 12 different languages were used following a template. See Appendix 2 for an overview of the focus groups and template used. Each discussion took one to two hours and were recorded and transcribed (or if not recorded, extensive notes were taken) and later translated into English.

Data from the focus group discussions was organised and analysed using the software NVivo. The data from the 30 focus group discussions was merged into one project (but classified after regions), and collections of references about specific themes were created (see Table 2) under which the material was sorted. The categorical themes were created inductively and helped in identifying emerging patterns and ideas. Text search queries and word trees (see Figure 1) facilitated the coding.

Theme	Sub theme	Brief explanation
Awareness		Awareness about UgandaWatch

		and how users got to know about it
Challenges	Cost, Technology	Everything related to perceived challenges, majority categorised under cost or technological issues
Expectations		If expectations were met or not
Experience		What was reported, if UgandaWatch made a difference or not
Feedback	SMS, Report, Website	References regarding the feedback loop; the automated SMS-reply, if more feedback was asked for, if website was used, etc.
Trust	Privacy, Safety	Concerns related to trust and privacy as well as personal safety
Why use		Reasons why users decided to use UgandaWatch (motivating factors).

Table 2. Themes and sub themes in focus group data.

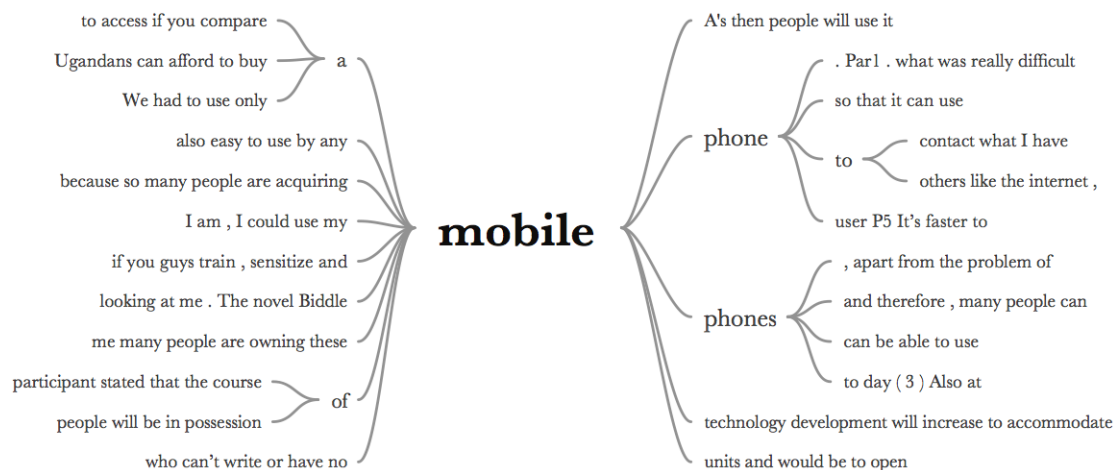


Figure 1. Word tree, using the word *mobile* to illustrate.

4. Results

Returning to the research question, this section examines how and under what conditions access to ICT tools (mobile devices, networks and UgandaWatch platform) can be made usable and useful for increased political participation in the context of UgandaWatch and its users (people and communities).

4.1. Motivating factors to participate

According to the SMS survey, the single biggest reason for the crowd's participation was to "Help my country" (71%), followed by "Get help" constituting 14% of the answers, while 11% of the respondents stated that they had nowhere else to turn. Focus group participants further stressed that they would not have reported the incidents they witnessed if UgandaWatch had not been available due to limited trust in established government bodies (i.e. Electoral Commission or police). Many focus group participants, not tied to reply options in the questionnaire, also hoped that their reports would bring real change to Uganda's electoral and political landscape. Other than the desire for change, focus group participants established that the decision to participate was further motivated by convenience (quick and easy) and confidentiality (many participants had noted UgandaWatch's guarantee that privacy would be

respected). DEMGroup’s independent status also created a level of trust in that the reported incident would be acted upon. The simple act of sending a report via SMS for a perceived good reason induced different feelings among participants. Some felt empowered through their access and possibility to participate, such as the participants who said they “felt brave”, felt “proud of your message being read worldwide” and that UgandaWatch made people “know their rights and how they can exercise their rights and their freedom”. Some felt the technology’s biggest contribution was its equalising effect: “everybody was given equal chance to participate” and users “irrespective of social class to take part in monitoring elections”.

A majority (84%) of the UgandaWatch users voted in the elections and 41% of the crowd were involved in a civic or non-governmental organisation. While most users (46%) expressed a preference for traditional means (i.e. public meetings) as the best method for political participation, almost a quarter (23%) preferred SMS. Call in radio was considered as a good option by 13%. Some focus group participants highlighted that UgandaWatch made it easier to participate at the individual level compared to creating a forum in radio stations or to walk to a government official and express their views.

4.2. Concerns and limitations of mobile enabled crowdsourcing

The main challenge using UgandaWatch was, according to the survey, the cost involved in sending a report (see Figure 2). Almost one in three respondents expressed that 100 Ugandan shillings (US \$0.04) per SMS was an obstacle. Focus groups participants elaborated on this issue, confirming that the SMS cost was a challenge, but that the issue was not with the cost of one SMS, but the accumulated cost as a result of many issues to report. Or when one SMS consisting of 160 characters was not enough to compile the report about the incident (including what, when and where) and many SMSs had to be sent. Mostly northern region participants raised concerns about the cost, and together with participants from the western regions said they had sent fewer messages to the platform than they otherwise would have due to the cost. A few highlighted that the challenge in getting airtime hindered them from participating more. Participants pointed out that if the service had been toll free, it would also have been more inclusive and the quality of information would have improved too, by ensuring reports more equally from all over the country.

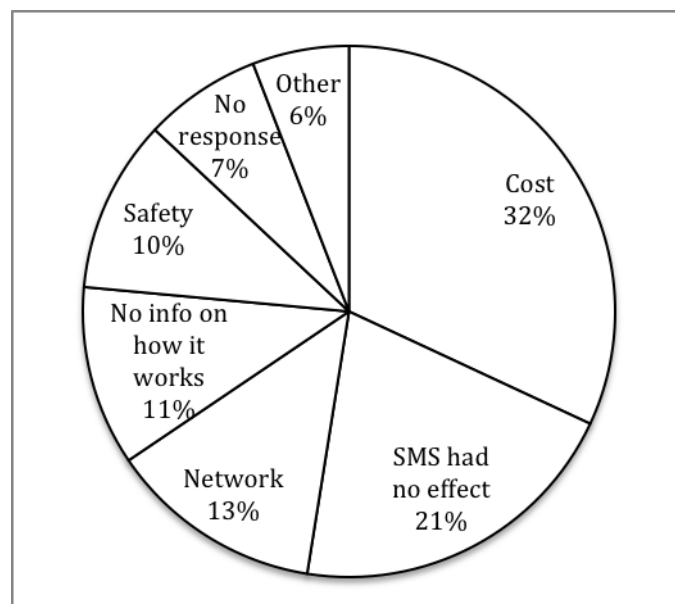


Figure 2. Perceived challenges by users of UgandaWatch.

As Figure 2 indicates, another major challenge was that users found that the SMS had no effect (21% of respondents) or that they did not receive a response from UgandaWatch (7%). Network issues were experienced by 13% of the crowd. Personal safety was considered to be a challenge by 10% of the crowd, although that figure is probably higher since the users with security concerns probably did not respond to the SMS survey. Many focus group participants reported significant concerns and fear about using UgandaWatch, but still made the decision to use the service because they were either reassured by the messages about confidentiality, felt that it was an important activity, or felt that there was nowhere else to turn.

The two main technical components of UgandaWatch were the SMS shortcode and the public website where the verified reports were mapped. Results from the SMS survey show that many users never used both components: 44% of the UgandaWatch crowd never accessed UgandaWatch's website and thereby did not see the bigger picture of the exercise. Interestingly, a clear majority of the users who did access the website did so through their mobile web browser (35%) (see Figure 3). Lack of access facilities, lack of funds to access Internet, computer illiteracy, and lack of interest were mentioned as the reasons to why users did not visit the website.

The data in this study shows that a majority of those who had learned about the initiative had done so via radio (37%), followed by friends and newspapers (18% and 17%, respectively.) Focus group participants cited a variety of regional radio stations as their first source of information about UgandaWatch, confirming that radio was the single most important channel for raising awareness. Focus groups participants also believed that UgandaWatch's impact would have been greater if the initiative had been promoted better, started earlier, and if it had educational elements on how to use SMS.

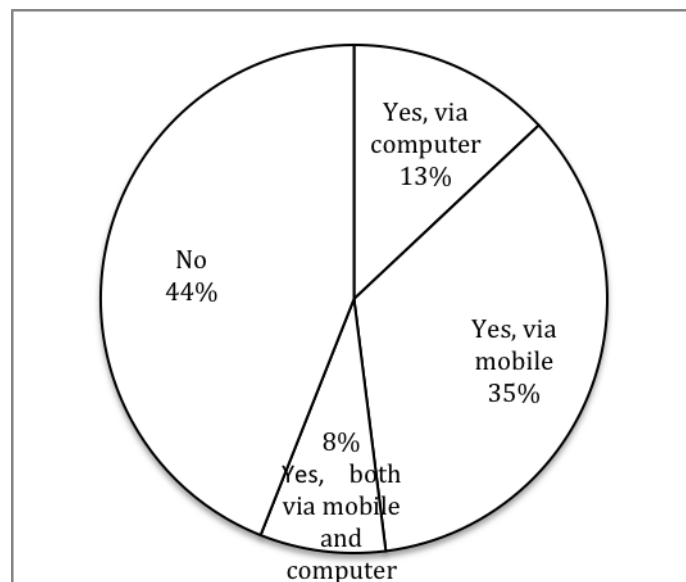


Figure 3. Majority of users who visited www.ugandawatch2011.org did so through their mobile phone.

5. Discussion and conclusion

These results shed light on factors and elements that influence effective use of mobile enabled crowdsourcing for increased political participation and refine our understanding of whether, how, when and why open crowdsourcing works. The case of UgandaWatch highlights some key factors that influence users' willingness to use mobile phones and crowdsourcing platforms as a channel for political participation.

A research issue in community informatics is how technology can enable communities to become more active [Gurstein 2007]. A first, and perhaps often overlooked factor, and not really addressed in this study, is that the community needs to be aware of the initiative. It is extremely hard and costly to reach out on a national scale, but awareness can be created through a variety of strategic and educational promotion such as radio, face-to-face marketing and local meetings. This must be in place in order to inform the community why the service should be used, how to use it and what increased participation might lead to. Once the awareness is created and access granted, action based on the actual interaction is what really makes a difference.

Related to the issue of access and interaction is affordability. Users indicated that the cost of using the service restricted the interaction. What this further implies is that given mobile access and awareness of the service, users could still not participate to the extent they wanted due to the costs involved. The poor were excluded as with many other attempts to facilitate political participation. Indeed, Cornwall [2003, p.1325] observes, "claims to 'full participation' [...] too often boil down to situations in which only the voices and versions of the vocal few are raised and heard". In this case, the ones with the economic means to do so.

The results from this study show that UgandaWatch was not interactive enough; it lacked a citizen engagement strategy and feedback mechanisms. This can be seen as a fundamental reason for its limited impact. The fact that up to half of the users never visited the UgandaWatch website further highlights one of the main challenges with crowdsourcing using feature phones designed for voice and SMS only: closing the feedback-loop. Future platforms need to address this weakness and make sure that all users can access aggregated data if they are to continue to feed similar crowdsourcing platforms with information. To close the feedback-loop and create meaningful response to users, ICT-enabled channels need to be complemented by traditional communication channels to increase accessibility and solidity. Using multiple channels could include engaging with public officials and civil society representatives, printing maps and results in traditional newspapers, producing and distributing reports, or discussing the reports and results in radio or TV, and in that way provide feedback to users on how the crowdsourced data is used. This could serve not only to attract and empower those who are disenchanting with political processes, but also to engage political elites and make them see the usefulness in initiatives such as UgandaWatch to create partnerships with constituencies.

Given the fact that the 2011 general election was apparently plagued with irregularities [EU EOM 2011], it became evident that UgandaWatch had bigger constraints, too. It would be naïve to believe that a crowdsourcing initiative would have affected the final result of the election, especially since UgandaWatch did not seek to provide comprehensive assessments of the electoral process. That said, UgandaWatch gave rather grand-sounding promises about mobilising citizen engagement and increasing political participation, something that was achieved to a certain extent, at least with focus on the quantitative aspects. Even though thousands

of citizens actively crowdsourced reports of electoral fraud via SMS, subsequently posted online, DEMGroup either largely ignored the reports or did not know how to follow up. This did not have much to do with the technology as such, but rather a lack of organisational know-how and capability. Therefore, in the end, participants were treated as objects, i.e. users were enlisted in the process to secure their compliance with “pre-shaped development agendas” [Cornwall 2003, p.1327]. That said, even if users were disappointed with feedback mechanisms, crowdsourcing has the potential to be an effective mechanism for promoting increased quantity and quality of political participation. It can function as a tool that enables both conventional and unconventional communication in its structured yet open design. However, for this to happen at scale, the number of issues discussed above need to be tackled.

As a contribution to the discussion of new versus traditional methods for political participation, the study results propose that traditional ways for political participation are still the most important in Uganda. ICT-enabled methods complement traditional modes of participation, especially as they also seem to attract those who do not participate through the traditional channels. The fact that 16% of the crowd used UgandaWatch, but did not vote, indicates that UgandaWatch provided an alternative channel for participation in the electoral process through reporting instead of voting, functioning as a substitute or supplement to traditional means. The fact that the third most frequent reason for participating in UgandaWatch was because there was nowhere else to turn was also verified by many focus group participants who said they would not have reported the incidents they witnessed if UgandaWatch had not been available. This indicates that a service like this fills an existing void, and that crowdsourcing offers an alternative channel for political participation – also among those who normally do not participate – something that increases equality of political participation in a positive direction.

5.1. Further research

The quantitative data came from a random sample of 1,800 users of UgandaWatch where as many as 87% were male, meaning that a clear majority of the UgandaWatch users were male. Can this be explained by the fact that a majority of mobile phone owners in Uganda are male? Reliable disaggregated mobile phone statistics for Uganda are not publically available, but existing studies point in this direction (for example, the latest national household survey reveals that there are more males (58%) who own mobile phones individually than females (46%) [UBOS 2014]). Is it because men’s disposable income is higher than women’s and male users can therefore afford to buy airtime? Or is it because Ugandan men in general are regarded as being more politically active than women, and therefore, find this new channel for political participation more appealing than women do? More research on the mobile phone gender gap with regard to political participation is needed.

5.2. Acknowledgements

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7. Appendix 1: SMS questionnaire

Q1 (158 characters)

This is a short survey (NO COST) by 6090/Ugandawatch. Your identity remains confidential. Participate?

1. Yes
2. No

To reply send: PART<space><Answer Nr> to 8282

Q2 (160 characters)

Where did you hear about citizen's reporting hotline 6090/Ugandawatch?

1. Newspaper
2. Radio
3. Flyer
4. Friend
5. Other

To reply send: HEAR<space><Answer Nr> to 8282

Q3 (159 characters)

Why did you participate via 6090?

1. Get help
2. Test the service
3. Help my country
4. Nowhere else to turn
5. Other

To reply send: REPORT<space><Answer Nr> to 8282

Q4 (159 characters)

Did you visit www.ugandawatch2011.org?

1. Yes, via computer
2. Yes, via mobile
3. Yes, both computer and mobile
4. NO

To reply send: VISIT<space><Answer Nr> to 8282

Q5 (160 characters)

Challenges using 6090?

1. Cost
2. Network
3. No info how it works
4. No reply
5. SMS had no effect
6. Safety
7. Other

To reply send: CHA<space><Answer Nr> to 8282

Q6 (160 characters)

Best way for democracy participation?

1. Internet
2. Call in Radio
3. Call in TV
4. SMS
5. Public meeting
6. Other

To reply send: DEMO<space><Answer Nr> to 8282

Q7 (109 characters)

Are you involved in a civic organisation / NGO?

1. Yes
2. No

To reply send: INVOLVED<space><Answer Nr> to 8282

Q8 (93 characters)

Did you vote in any of the elections?

1. Yes
2. No

To reply send: VOTE<space><Answer Nr> to 8282

Q9 (141 characters)

What is your age?

1. Female under 25
2. Female 25 or older
3. Male under 25
4. Male 25 or older

To reply send: AGE<space><Answer Nr> to 8282

Q10 (153 characters)

Thank you! Results @ sms.democracy@gmail.com.

Ugandawatch will also do focus groups. Participate?

1. Yes
2. No

To reply send: FOCUS<space><Answer Nr> to 8282

Reminder (159 characters)

REMINDER of the FREE survey by 6090/Ugandawatch. Your identity remain confidential. PLEASE participate?

1. Yes
2. No

To reply send: PART<space><Answer Nr> to 8282

Incentive question (160 characters)

Have a chance to WIN 20K airtime! Answer a FREE and confidential survey by 6090/Ugandawatch. Participate?

1. Yes
2. No

To reply send: WIN<space><Answer Nr> to 8282

8. Appendix 2: Focus group information and template

	Region	Sub-region	Location	Language	Urban/rural	N
1	Northern	West Nile	Adjumani	English/Madi	Rural	5
2	Northern	West Nile	Arua Town	English/Lugbara	Urban	8
3	Northern	West Nile	Maracha	English/Lugbara	Rural	8
4	Northern	West Nile	Nebbi	English/Alur	Rural	6
5	Northern	Acholi/Lango	Agago	English/Luo	Rural	11
6	Northern	Acholi/Lango	Gulu	English/Luo	Urban	9
7	Northern	Acholi/Lango	Pader	English/Luo	Rural	6
8	Northern	Acholi Lango	Lira	English/Luo	Urban	5

9	Eastern	Teso	Soroti	English/Iteso	Urban	9
10	Eastern	Teso	Kumi	English/Iteso	Rural	8
11	Eastern	Bugisu	Mbale	English	Urban	4
12	Eastern	Bugisu	Mbale	English	Urban	7
13	Eastern	Bugisu	Sironko	English/Lugisu	Rural	7
14	Eastern	Bugisu	Manafwa	English/Lugisu	Rural	7
15	Eastern	Busoga	Bugiri	English/Lusoga	Rural	-
16	Central	Kampala	Makindye	English	Urban	4
17	Central	Kampala	Kawempe	English	Urban	6
18	Central	Kampala	Rubaga	English/Luganda	Urban	6
19	Central	Kampala	Nakawa	English/Luganda	Urban	6
20	Central	Kampala (Wakiso)	Central K'la	English/Luganda	Urban	3
21	Central	Kampala (Wakiso)	Central K'la	English/Luganda	Urban	5
22	Central	Buganda, (Luwero)	Luwero Town	English/Luganda	Rural	8
23	Central	Buganda (Kiboga)	Kiboga Town	Luganda	Rural	-
24	Western	Rwenzori	Kasese Town	English/Lukonzo	Rural	6
25	Western	Rwenzori	Kasese Town	English/Lukonzo	Urban	6
26	Western	Ankole	Kabarole	English/Rutoro	Urban	8
27	Western	Ankole	Kabarole	English/Rutoro	Urban	8
28	Western	Ankole	Kyenjojo	English/Rutoro	Rural	7
29	Western	Ankole	Kiruhura	Runyankole	Rural	3
30	Western	Ankole (Isingiro, Bushenyi)	Mbarara	Runyankole	Rural	6

8.1. Focus group template

A. KNOWLEDGE

1. When I say '6090' or 'UgandaWatch,' what is the first word that comes to your mind?
2. How did you first learn about 6090 and UgandaWatch?
3. When do you first remember hearing about 6090 and UgandaWatch?
4. After you first time you heard about UgandaWatch, did you hear anything about it again or was it just that one time? [IF HEARD ABOUT IT AGAIN]: From where and how often?
5. Who was sponsoring UgandaWatch?
 - a. Did the fact that this group was sponsoring UgandaWatch make a difference in your decision to use the service OR not? Why?

B. TRUST AND PRIVACY

1. Did you have any concerns about using UgandaWatch before you sent information to the service?
2. Did you trust that UgandaWatch would keep your phone number private?
 - a. [IF YES]: How did UgandaWatch make you comfortable that your phone number would be protected?
 - b. [IF NO]: Why did you use UgandaWatch even though you felt your phone number would not be kept private?

C. EXPECTATIONS

1. When you first heard about UgandaWatch, how did you expect to work?
 - a. More specifically, how did you think the SMS report you sent to 6090 would be used by UgandaWatch?
2. Once you used UgandaWatch, did it meet your expectations?

- a. [IF YES]: How?
- b. [IF NO]: What more could UgandaWatch have done to meet your expectations?

D. USAGE

1. What made you decide to use UgandaWatch? [FOLLOW-UP ON ALL REASONS GIVEN EXTENSIVELY]
 - a. Out of the following, which would you say was the most important reason you decided to use UgandaWatch:
 - i. There was no other way to report the information.
 - ii. I could not travel to a place to report the information.
 - iii. It was the easiest way to report the information.
 - iv. It was safer for me to report the information using UgandaWatch.
 - v. I wanted the information to be public.
 - vi. I wanted to be a good citizen.
 - vii. I wanted something to change based on the information I gave.
2. You have a pen and paper in front of you. Write two (2) short sentences about your experience using UgandaWatch. [AFTER A PAUSE] Okay, let's read them one-by-one. [FOLLOW-UP ON EACH SENTENCE AND DISCUSS ONE-BY-ONE]
3. What was easy about using UgandaWatch?
 - a. What was difficult about using UgandaWatch?
4. How soon after you witnessed an incident or learned about information did you report it to UgandaWatch?
5. How many times did you report something to UgandaWatch?
6. What happened after you sent your information to UgandaWatch?
7. Were you satisfied with the response you received from UgandaWatch after sending your information?
8. If there was no UgandaWatch, would you have reported the information you sent to the service through some other means?
 - a. What would have stopped you from reporting the information?
9. Was UgandaWatch equal to or better than other ways to report incidents and information? Please explain.
10. Overall, were you happy OR not happy with the way UgandaWatch used your information?
11. What more would you want UgandaWatch to do with the information you sent to the service?
12. Did the cost of using UgandaWatch limit the number of times you used the service?
13. An SMS to UgandaWatch costs 100 Ugandan shillings. Is that a fair price? Why or why not?
 - a. What would you recommend as a fair price for sending an SMS to UgandaWatch?
14. Do you know other people who were aware of UgandaWatch during the election but didn't use the service?

E. WEBSITE

1. Have you ever visited the UgandaWatch website?

- a. Did you check the UgandaWatch website to see if the information you sent to UgandaWatch was posted?
 - b. Did you check the UgandaWatch website to see what else was being reported around the country?
 - c. [IF NO]: What was the reason you did not visit the site?
2. [FOR THOSE THAT VISITED THE UGANDAWATCH WEBSITE] What did you like best about the UgandaWatch website?
- a. How could the UgandaWatch website be improved?

F. ELECTION MALPRACTICE

1. What types of incidents or information do you think are appropriate to send to UgandaWatch during elections?
2. Let's take those one-by-one. What about _____ made you think it was something that was worthy of reporting?

G. VALUE

1. When you used UgandaWatch, did you think it would make a difference?
2. What contributions, if any, did UgandaWatch make to the recent election process?
 - a. How could UgandaWatch have made a bigger contribution to the process?
3. How important is this type of activity – being able to send an SMS to report information and incidents on elections to a public website – to you personally? Please explain.

H. FUTURE USAGE

1. Would UgandaWatch be a good way to report other types of incidents and information that are not election-related?
2. Now we are going to break into teams of two. Each team must come up with two non-election-related issues for which UgandaWatch could be used. Explain why it would be a good idea to use UgandaWatch for that issue and what UgandaWatch could do with the information it collected on that issue.

I. FUTURE ELECTION USAGE

1. Now let's go back to the topic of elections. Would you use UgandaWatch again in future elections? Why or why not?
2. About 900 people used UgandaWatch during the last elections. What could be done in future elections to increase the number of users of the service?
3. Do you think this kind of SMS technology that UgandaWatch used could play a bigger role in future elections?
4. In future elections, what type of information would you want to receive from UgandaWatch? Please be specific about the type of information you would like to receive and explain why you think it would be useful for you to receive this information?
5. In future elections, would you like to receive information sent by SMS from UgandaWatch about incidents and information reported in your region or district? Please explain why you think it would be important to receive this type of information from UgandaWatch.