Abstract—This paper examines the challenges and opportunities in using mobile phones for political participation. In doing so, a study was conducted on the open crowdsourcing election monitoring platform UgandaWatch. SMS questionnaires were sent out to a) a randomised sample of Ugandan mobile phone users and to b) a sample of users of UgandaWatch. The key findings were; a) open crowdsourcing provides a useful channel in cases when citizens experience that there is nowhere else to turn, and when citizens need help; b) the major reasons for not using UgandaWatch was not having heard of the service and not having anything to report; c) the primary challenges in using UgandaWatch was fear of personal safety, the cost factor, and the perception of participation not having any effect; d) most users never visited the website but of those who did 75 per cent did so through their mobile browsers. Drawing on our findings, we recommend; 1) strategic and educational marketing: inform the public why the service should be used and how to use it; 2) closing the feedback-loop and decide how to use the crowdsourced data and communicate this to the users; 3) using multiple channels: combine a spectrum of traditional and ICT-enabled channels to increase accessibility and solidity.

Keywords: crowd, crowdsourcing, election monitoring, mobile, M4D, participation, SMS, SMS-questionnaire.

1. INTRODUCTION

Political participation is often discussed in quantitative terms, and this in relation to voter turnout. This discussion rests upon the assumption that it is the level of participation that has the democratic implications (Petersson 2006, p.233). However, increasing numeric participation is not necessarily the same matter as increasing the equality of the political participation. Enabling participation for groups that usually do not participate might not increase voter turnout, but may instead contribute to equality in political participation (Beckman 2009: p.14 ff.).

Numerous practitioners and academics believe that innovative use of information and communication technology (ICT) lead to increased political participation (Heacock 2009, Banks 2008, Schuler 2008, UNCTAD 2011). Heacock (2009, p.6) conclude in her comparative research that “digital media can empower and inform citizens in ways as yet unmatched by any other method, and the demand for participatory technology in Africa is high”, UN highlight that ICT “can facilitate democratic processes and increase participation by citizens” (UNCTAD, 2011 p.15). Banks (2008 p.25) writes that mobile phones “allow citizens to engage more actively in civil society by monitoring elections and helping keep governments accountable” and Schuler (2008, p.144) states that a “growing number of election-monitoring organizations around the world employ SMS technology to improve the effectiveness of their monitoring efforts”.

Mobile Participation? Crowdsourcing during the 2011 Uganda General Elections

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Mobile phones are the most widely spread ICT in sub-Saharan Africa (ITU 2010, Hellström 2010), and “the most important activist technology” of recent (Zuckerman 2007). In Uganda, where almost 100 percent of the population is covered by a mobile phone network and where almost half the population (theoretically) has a mobile phone subscription (i.e. 14.7 million active SIM-cards, which does not equal mobile phone ownership) (GSMA 2011), mobile technology opens immense opportunities for new modes of communication, interaction and political participation (Hellström 2010).

In the run up to the general elections in Uganda 2011, a number of SMS enabled tools were deployed to increase the political participation: Political campaigns using mass SMS broadcasts, SMS application to determine voter registration status, SMS news service subscription, voter education using bulk SMS, parallel voter tallying and crowdsourced election monitoring platforms.

Democracy Monitoring Group (DEMGroup), a coalition of four Ugandan civil society organisations, funded by the Deepening Democracy Programme with technical assistance from National Democratic Institute (NDI) and Mountbatten Ltd, developed an open crowdsourcing platform dubbed UgandaWatch. The purpose was to provide citizens with a way to share their observations via SMS on various issues such as vote buying, registration hiccups, inappropriate campaign conduct, cases of violence, general complaints or positive feedback. The initiative was preceded by a national marketing campaign where radio jingles, newspaper advertisements and flyers were used to promote UgandaWatch and the dedicated shortcode 6090. The initiative generated more than 10’000 reports via SMS sent by more than 3’000 unique users. The crowdsourced reports were manually verified and geo-tagged by a team of trained volunteers before it was published online (however, only 25 per cent of them were actually published, the rest were filtered due to reasons such as issues in regard to verification or that texts were considered as spam). The cost of sending a SMS had been negotiated to 100 Uganda Shillings, i.e. roughly the price of a normal peer-to-peer SMS.

A typical message sent to UgandaWatch could read “Youth elections in kanara sub-county ended in failure. complaints due to chaos, mismatch between votes cast & registered voters” or “In Mugalu zone mpererwe, da ballot boxes are not yet reached at da polling station”. Every message was to generate an automatic reply stating: “Thanks for SMSing UgandaWatch. We are independent of any party. Your number remains private. Our volunteers will follow up. Find out more: ugandawatch2011.org”.

1.1 Mobiles, Crowdsourcing and Election Monitoring
Using mobile communication technology to crowdsource in order to monitor and observe elections has been used in a number of sub-Saharan African states. The basic idea is that ICTs allow “very small contributions to be
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...effectively aggregated. Coordination costs have historically outweighed the benefits of small contributions, but new ICTs can be used to lower the associated overhead" (Garrett 2006). Crowdsourcing enables distributed interaction (Donner 2010), i.e. many-to-many interaction between users and ICT, distributed across geographical space and in time. In this research context, the small contribution of a single SMS becomes part of something bigger through the use of a temporal and geospatial archive of events, usually tagged on a comprehensive data map (see Ushahidi, CitiVox or Drupal’s Managing News for example).

Election monitoring initiatives using crowdsourcing can be divided into two main categories:

- Bounded crowdsourcing where trained volunteers, workers or observers sending (coded) reports to a centralized server.
- Open crowdsourcing where general public is allowed to submit (unstructured) reports.

See Table 1 for some recent mobile election monitoring initiatives in sub-Saharan Africa through open and bounded crowdsourcing.

**Table 1: Examples of Various SMS Supported Election Monitoring Platforms, 2010–11**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Technology</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Benin</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>FORS Elections monitoring</td>
<td>Citi Vox, Frontline SMS</td>
<td>300 organised election observers. 2,000 reports via SMS. Volume problems with FrontlineSMS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Burundi Friends Observe initiative, African Great Lakes Initiative (AGLI)</td>
<td>FrontlineSMS</td>
<td>120 citizen reporters. 735 SMS’s sent in which were then re-distributed, sending out 7,449 SMS’s. No mapping.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>UgandaWatch (DEM Group, NDI)</td>
<td>Drupal, shortcode</td>
<td>Crowdsourced monitoring. 10’000 reports, 2’500 published</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>ReclaimNaija</td>
<td>Ushahidi, Frontline SMS</td>
<td>Crowdsourced monitoring. 8’153 reports, 0.16% verified.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: FrontlineSMS (2010), CitiVox (2011), ReclaimNaija (2011)*

Based on the cases listed in Table 1, the rationale for using mobile phones to monitor and to facilitate citizen participation are, but not limited to:

- Speed (real-time reporting)
- SMS format (ubiquitous)
- Privacy (in relation to other methods)
- Costs (low cost solution compared with other solutions)
- Interaction (mobile phone user can receive information, document, publish and network—from a passive recipient to an active user)
Identified challenges are:

- Speed (information overload caused by unverified data)
- SMS format (character limitations, takes time, put user to risk, hard to verify)
- Privacy (threats to citizens’ privacy and safety when reporting)
- Costs (airtime, register shortcode)
- Accuracy (inaccurate information)
- Control (government surveillance)
- Technical problems (volume problems, delays, network)
- Illiteracy and lack of training
- Demographics (young urban male versus elderly rural woman)

2. **Data and Survey Methodology**

A few weeks after the elections, two SMS questionnaires were sent out to more than 100’000 mobile phone subscribers, querying their awareness of UgandaWatch and aiming at: a) finding out the reason(s) for this form of political participation and, b) understanding the challenges and opportunities in using mobile phones for political participation. Two different questionnaires were sent out to:

- **general public**, i.e. a randomized sample of 112'381 unique Ugandan mobile phone numbers resulting in 856 complete questionnaires.
- **crowd**, i.e. a sample of 1'500 users of UgandaWatch resulting in a total of 1'722 relevant answers.

Each question was sent in a separate SMS where the first one asked for an informed consent regarding participating in the survey free of cost. Only those giving their consent received the following SMSs. All questions were tested on a group of Ugandans with differing socio-economic background and thereafter modified, before finalized and sent to the samples.

2.1 **General Public**

In March-April 2011, a structured questionnaire of six questions was sent out via SMS to 112'381 unique Ugandan mobile numbers (hereafter this sample will be referred to as the “general public”). It generated 856 complete questionnaires, i.e. understandable replies on all five questions asked, representing a response rate of 0.76 per cent. The survey design, where the system generated questions only after a reply on the previous had been given, led to a dropping response throughout the surveys (initial question for example generated a response rate of 2.78 per cent). To increase the response rate, a reminder was sent to 2’500 numbers within the initial sample. The reminder had a huge impact and increased the response rate from 122 completed questionnaires to 856.

We queried basic demographic information, but did not collect identifying information. Anonymous phone numbers were randomly selected from the subscriber database of Dmark Mobile (www.dmarkmobile.
com). Due to technical reasons associated to the dedicated shortcode used, the questionnaire could only be sent to MTN and Warid customers, i.e. only to two of Uganda’s seven mobile network operators. The fact that the population, from which the sample is drawn, is subscribers of SMS-services, such as daily bible quotes and sport news, indicate that the sample is not representative of the Ugandan population, but instead skewed in favour of young, urban men. Given the fact that 73 per cent of the respondents were men, the sample can not be said to represent the Ugandan population as a whole. Instead the sample may be viewed as a most-likely sample with a certain level of mobile literacy. “General public” in this case is thereby not representative of the average Ugandan, but rather of the average ICT-savvy Ugandan.

2.2 UgandaWatch Crowd

In early March 2011, about 3’000 unique numbers, representing users of UgandaWatch (hereafter referred to as the crowd), had sent reports to UgandaWatch. A randomised selection of 1’500 mobile numbers was made to which the first question of the questionnaire was sent via Text To Change’s (www.texttochange.org) shortcode 8282. To increase the response rate, we sent one reminder to close to 1000 of the numbers as well as offering an incentive to 500 numbers, in the shape of an opportunity to win 20’000 Uganda shillings worth of airtime, for participating in the survey.

The incentive brought an actual gain to participating in the survey but also meant there was a greater risk that people outside our population would respond, or that the same person would use different numbers to respond to the survey. To limit this problem, after the incentive-SMS was sent, we only kept the replies coming from the original randomised sample. This meant an increased data loss, but possibly a more qualitative sample.

The randomized sample of 1500 mobile numbers turned out to be an exceptionally dynamic one: only a fraction of the replies came from the original sample (i.e. rest came from numbers outside the original sample), and same number did not answer all questions (numbers were lost and new added throughout the 10-question survey). We identify two possible explanations of this. The first is that different SIM-cards were used. The respondents may have received a question to one SIM-card, but then used another to reply. The second explanation is that the persons in the sample shared the survey with friends, who then also participated in the survey. In this case, it is hard to know whether they had used UgandaWatch and thereby representative of the population of UgandaWatch users. However, the first half of the questionnaire required experience from UgandaWatch and a qualitative review of the replies rather support the first explanation. Therefore it is assumed that the sample is in fact representative for the UgandaWatch users.

The response rate for each and every question was about 10 per cent. However, only 29 numbers, less than 2 per cent, answered all survey
questions. Unfortunately, this makes bi- and multivariate analysis difficult
and also illustrates the survey dynamic, with a very large amount of
numbers entering and exiting the survey at various times.

2.3 Critique of Method
Running a SMS questionnaire had a number of limitations. The format
of an SMS is one: formulating the question and reply alternatives using
160 characters is hard. It is also problematic to connect a number to
an individual; same person can answer many times using different
numbers, different persons can answer the questionnaire using the same
number, different persons may have been answering different parts of the
questionnaire etc.. The mobile phone is only the medium. It is therefore hard
to establish correlation and to control the sample size (snow ball sample).
The questionnaires were all free of charge for the respondent, i.e. the cost
was on the receiver. Designing a questionnaire like this makes it hard to
budget for and control the total cost since all incoming SMS are allowed
and spammers are hard to stop.

3. Results
3.1 Reaching Out
Despite the national marketing campaign and a relatively generous marketing
budget, mainly used on radio jingles and newspaper advertisements, flyers
and t-shirts, about 40 per cent of the sample general public had never heard
of UgandaWatch. A majority of those who had learned about it had done
so via radio (45 per cent), followed by newspapers and friends (17 per cent
each).

The numbers were very similar among the sample crowd (radio 36
per cent, newspapers 17 per cent and friends 18 per cent). The flyers had
a bigger impact among the crowd than among the general public (8 per
cent as opposed to 2 per cent). It stands clear that radio promotion had the
single largest impact for spreading the word about the SMS hotline, but
that newspapers and social networks also constituted important channels.
Initially bulk SMS was used to promote UgandaWatch, but due to the
unclear legal status of unsolicited bulk SMS in the run-up for the election,
this marketing method was abandoned.

3.2 Why (Not) Participate?
Among the general public, the top-two reasons for not using UgandaWatch
were that they had not heard of it, as well as that they had nothing to
report (22 per cent). 9 per cent reported that they felt it was too unsafe. It is
however likely that those experiencing a high degree of unsafety using SMS
for political participation would not at all respond to a SMS survey like this,
the percentage may therefore indicate the minimum level of safety concerns.
4 per cent did not use UgandaWatch because of lack of time. Only a few
respondents of the general public (less than 1 per cent) found the service too expensive and indicated that money constituted an obstacle.

The single biggest reason for the crowd’s participation was to “Help my country” (72 per cent). The second biggest reason, constituting 14 per cent of the answers, was to “Get help” followed by 11 per cent of the answers stating they had nowhere else to turn. Only a few answered they wanted to test the service or stated other reasons.

The number one challenge using UgandaWatch among the crowd was the cost. Almost a third of the answers expressed that 100 Uganda shillings was an obstacle. Almost as many, 28 per cent, state as challenge that the SMS had no effect or that they did not receive a reply from UgandaWatch. 12 per cent of the crowd had network issues. The percentage among the crowd stating safety as a challenge for using UgandaWatch, was only slightly higher at 11 per cent, compared to the general public.

The two components of UgandaWatch was the SMS hotline and the public website where the reports were mapped. However, results from the survey show that many of the citizen reporters never used both components: almost half of the crowd (45 per cent) never visited www.ugandawatch2011.org and did thereby not see the bigger picture of the whole exercise. Of those in the crowd that did visit the website, 75 per cent did so using their browser in their mobile phones.

When asked about the best methods for democratic participation, a steady majority of 61 per cent of the general public and 46 per cent of the crowd expressed a preference for traditional means as public meetings.

Only 12 per cent of the general public’s answers mention SMS or Internet while among the crowd this figure was 32 per cent. It is possible that a skewness in favour of the traditional means has occurred, caused by the articulation of the question asking for the “Best way for democracy
participation?”, not giving room for the possibility of several methods being preferred. In spite of this, up to 10 per cent of the respondents did actually state several methods, and to limit the problem of skewness, all their stated alternatives were included in the results.

Further, a vast majority, 61 per cent, of the crowd state that they are not involved in a civic organisation and 15 per cent state that they did not vote in any of the elections.

4. Discussion

4.1 Marketing of UgandaWatch

Despite the national marketing campaign of UgandaWatch, roughly 40 per cent of the general public had never heard of it. This illustrates the challenge of marketing SMS-services, as well as the implications of non-existent meta-information on mobile applications and services. There is no way for a isolated user with a feature phone to find out what solutions are available, why and how to use them as opposed to a Internet user who can use a search engine.

As stated above, the initial idea was to promote UgandaWatch via bulk SMS, but since unsolicited SMS’s are a legal grey zone in Uganda, the idea was scalped. A major advantage in promoting the initiative via SMS would have been that the actual shortcode 6090 would automatically have entered people’s inboxes making it easier for people to remember and send reports to the platform.

Other similar projects seem to face marketing problems too. One of Ushahidi’s co-founder, Juliana Rotich, notes the limited impact the platform had within Kenya when the service was rolled out in 2007. Ushahidi had no communication campaign to help people learn about the platform and those who used it were mostly regular Internet users. She states, “we were not able to reach a critical mass of people in the country, partly because we did not
get much local awareness” (Essoungou 2010). Marketing of the platform has in fact been a challenge for many Ushahidi implementations.

Yet another example comes from Transparency International who carried out a random sample survey of individual knowledge about the anti-corruption hotline operated by Kenya’s anti-corruption commission. The study “revealed that only 33 per cent knew of the hotline’s existence despite a high public knowledge of corruption issues and government efforts to publicise the service” (Transparency International, 2009, p.2).

It is clear that radio was the single most important channel for marketing UgandaWatch. With as many hearing about it through friends, it is possible that the impact of the word of mouth, and social networks, was underestimated in the marketing plan. Related to this issue is the quality of the marketing campaign. Many of the messages sent were not very informative and required follow up and verification. 75 per cent of all the messages sent to UgandaWatch were never published.

4.2 Closing the Feedback Loop

Almost half of the UgandaWatch informants never accessed UgandaWatch’s website. This highlights one of the main challenges with crowdsourcing using low-end units designed for voice and SMS only: closing the feedback loop. This needs to be addressed if people are to continue feeding similar crowdsourcing platforms with information. Luckily, of those who did visit the website, 75 per cent did it through their mobile, again indicating the role mobile Internet do and will play in the future.

The fact that the third most frequent reason for participating through UgandaWatch was because there was nowhere else to turn indicates that a service like this fills an existing void. Simultaneously, 14 per cent turned to UgandaWatch to get help. It is however unclear if DEMGroup and their partners had the same intention with the service as the users. On one hand, UgandaWatch was promoted as a “Citizen’s Reporting SMS Hotline” indicating that UgandaWatch was not an emergency number providing help, but rather a number to call for passing on information. On the other hand, UgandaWatch also emphasized that they “investigate” as well as report to the police and the Electoral Commission. This implies that the service may actually provide help. The communication of the purpose of UgandaWatch was, in other words, unclear. This is also emphasised by the 21 per cent who experienced it as a challenge that their SMS had no effect or that they did not receive any response. A question, which arises, is what impact this ambiguity will have on future M4D-services. With UgandaWatch being one of the pioneering large-scale open crowdsourcing implementations in Uganda it is possible that those, whose expectations were not met, will reject future attempts.
4.3 Affordability

Discussions were held within DEMGroup to subsidise the service and even offer it for free but the fear was that this would generate a lot of unsolicited messages and abuse of the platform.

Surprisingly, in the shed of all the theories pointing to lack of resources as an obstacle for participation, only a small percentage of the general public reported they did not use UgandaWatch because of lack of money. Simultaneously, a third of the crowd stated cost as a challenge for using UgandaWatch. In other words, among those who were not using UgandaWatch cost was not a reason for avoiding the service, but among those participating the cost did constitute an obstacle. A way to understand this could be that the users of UgandaWatch may use the service several times, and that the accumulated cost thereby constitutes an obstacle for participation.

4.4 Political Participation through ICT

Both the general public and the UgandaWatch crowd preferred public meetings as method for democratic participation. Consequently, as a contribution to the discussion of new versus traditional methods for participation, it seems as if traditional ways for participation are still the most important, both for those already participating through ICT and for those who do not. Nevertheless, ICT-enabled methods appear to constitute a complement, especially SMS and radio. To nuance this finding, it is important to bear in mind that the question in the survey was in regard to democratic participation in general. When looking at participation in specific issues, it is possible that the results would differ. It is also worth noting that whereas only 3 per cent of the general public found SMS being a good method for democratic participation, as many as 22 percent of the UgandaWatch users preferred SMS. Thus, it seems as if when using a specific service for ICT-enabled participation, one’s preference and understanding for mobiles as a tool for participation in general, increases.

A vast majority of the UgandaWatch crowd stated that they were not involved in civic organisations. It is of course possible that those not being involved in a civic organisation use other means for participation. However, the term “civic organisation” is fairly inclusive including for example churches and community-based organisations. Conclusively, it seems as if this form of SMS-participation does attract also those who do not participate through the traditional channels. If SMS-enabled participation can offer a channel for participation also among those who normally do not participate, this is something that will affect political equality in a positive direction. The fact that 15 per cent of the crowd did use UgandaWatch, but did not vote, also shows that UgandaWatch provided an additional channel to voting, for participation in the electoral process.
4.5 Be Political, But not too Political!

An advantage using SMS to report incidents is the possibility of privacy and security:

“For example, if one is witnessing an event first-hand it may not be possible to inform others by a traditional cell-phone call since people in the vicinity might overhear and might misunderstand the reasons why other people are being alerted, putting the observer at risk.”

—(FrontlineSMS, 2010)

However, about 10 per cent reported that it was too unsafe to send a SMS to UgandaWatch. This figure is probably higher since the users with security concerns did probably not respond to the SMS survey either. Digital communications leave traces, SMS being no exception. SMS are permanent records, stored by the operator and can be accessed and tracked by outsiders (i.e. government) at any time. Even if the SIM card is changed the phone’s unique identifier (the underlying phone hardware, i.e. IMEI, International Mobile Equipment Identity) can be tracked and the sender exposed.

Human mobile technology activities generate a lot of spatio-temporal data constantly recorded by the operator for operational and billing purposes. The data could be used for a number of innovative, location-based applications like intelligent marketing and effective transportation systems. Authorities could also use the data for whatever purpose putting the individual privacy and health at risk. How many did not use the service because of reasons like this is impossible to tell, but self-censorship and privacy/security issues are to be taken seriously.

During the election day the regulator (under pressure from the government), ordered the operators to filter and block SMS traffic and specific words in messages (Biryabarema 2011). Filtered SMSs later on reached the platform but created a terrible backlog and the whole idea of publishing observations in near real-time was lost. Therefore, when operating in politically sensitive environments it is important to have various backup systems and communication channels in place.

5. Conclusion

For mobile phones to be a tool that increase the political participation at scale, a number of issues need to be addressed.

- Marketing is an issue, which in this case had not been resolved to a satisfying extent. A substantial proportion of the ICT-savvy general public had never heard of UgandaWatch and did thereby not have the opportunity to use it. Among those using UgandaWatch, there was confusion regarding the purpose of the service - people did not know what UgandaWatch really was. Marketing is key and should not be underestimated, preferable is also to make the marketing
campaign educational (how to use the service) and explain its cause (why use the service and what to expect).

- Close the feedback loop and find ways to interact with the crowd. Users described it as an obstacle to their participation when they experienced that there were no results of their reporting, or when their participation was not confirmed. This highlights one of the main crowd sourcing challenges when mostly low-end units are used as the only channel. When civil society uses SMS as a method for participation, it is presumably because it is believed that the interaction of SMSs provides an added value. However, if the tool itself is not used in an interactive manner, the idea falls flat. The automated confirmation reply solved some of the problems but not all. The geo-tagging could have been used better, for example by enabling feedback to the users in the form of a response SMS informing the user of the top-three reported incidents in his or her area. With a majority of those visiting the website, doing so through their mobile phones, it is crucial that the website is developed having the interface of a mobile browser in mind. Nevertheless, the fact that about half of the users of the SMS-service did not at all visit the website, emphasises the need for additional feedback channels. Without the feedback or the experience that one’s participation has some kind of result, there is a risk that users will argue that participation is useless and, as a consequence, abandon the service after their first try.

- Multiple channels are not only necessary when it comes to feedback to the user. When operating in politically sensitive environments it is important to have various backup-systems and communication channels in place. Relying on only one channel – SMS - as UgandaWatch did, makes the system very vulnerable. During Election Day when SMS were filtered and blocked for some hours the whole platform became static. By integrating more channels, such as a call-in function, status updates and tweets, the service would become more solid. A related issue is that some users might refrain from using a SMS-service when wanting to report sensitive information. Thus, a broader spectrum of channels to choose from may limit the serious issues of self-censorship and privacy/security, and as a consequence also result in more information.

New information and communication technology like mobile phones seems to offer a promising complement to traditional methods for participation. People, who have used ICT-enabled channels, seem to be keen on exploring them in the future. SMS-enabled participation also appears to attract those not usually participating, and thus contributing to political equality. By constituting a countrywide venue for observation of the electoral process, citizens all over Uganda could participate in creating
conditions for a freer and fairer election in Uganda. However, it is also important to remember the voices not being heard in this venue - whose problems were reported on and whose were not? In our study, issues regarding the construction and implementation of a mobile service of this kind became evident. Nevertheless, it was also clear that many of these issues could quite easily be remedied. Hopefully, lessons can be learned from this groundbreaking initiative to make further use of the possibilities that mobile phones can offer for democracy and development.

6. Acknowledgement

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