Participation through Mobile Phones
- A Study of SMS use during the Ugandan General Elections 2011

Johan Hellström
DSV, Stockholm University
SE-106 91 Stockholm
Sweden
+46 (0)73 689 21 20
johanh@dsv.su.se

Anna Karefelt
Uppsala University
Gamla Torget 2, 751 20 Uppsala
Sweden
+46 (0)70 648 74 96
annakarefelt@gmail.com

ABSTRACT
In this paper, we study the case of the Ugandan election 2011 and the non-governmental organization DEMGroup, who set up two SMS-enabled election monitoring platforms: 1) UgandaWatch, an open crowdsourcing platform for citizen election monitoring via SMS, and 2) a systematical election observation, deploying 6'000 trained observers for bounded crowdsourcing. By reaching out to the potential and the actual users of these two crowdsourcing initiatives, we examine the nature of the opportunities and challenges when using mobile phones for participation. In doing so, we will draw on theories of incentives for participation and crowdsourcing.

The analysis relies on three different sources of data; 1) SMS-survey of a randomized sample of Ugandan mobile phone users; 2) SMS-survey of a sample of users of UgandaWatch; 3) SMS-survey of a randomized sample of election observers using SMS to monitor the elections.

This study explains why people are attracted to open crowdsourcing platforms, the reasons for staying away from the service and the challenges in actually using it. In our surveys we asked questions such as preferred method for political participation, main challenges in using UgandaWatch and if users ever visited the website www.ugandawatch2011.org, where the reports were published.

The key findings were; a) Citizen reporting platforms 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 the citizen reporting service, was fear of personal safety, the cost factor, and the perception of participation not having any effect;

d) Using mobile phones for participation seem to attract groups of citizens not participating in other arenas, which suggest that this channel is contributing positively to political equality.

Using mobile phones for participation seem to attract groups of citizens not participating in other arenas, which suggest that this channel is contributing positively to political equality. 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, and keep context in mind when choosing marketing channels; 2) Closing the feedback-loop and using the data: 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.

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Categories and Subject Descriptors
H.5.3 Group and Organization Interfaces: Collaborative computing, Web-based interaction.

General Terms
Management.

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

1. INTRODUCTION
In the run-up for the general elections in Uganda 2011, mobile solutions were widely deployed: Political campaigns using mass SMS broadcasts, ringtones and automated calls, SMS application to determine voter registration status, SMS news service subscriptions, parallel voter tallying and crowdsourced election monitoring platforms, were all creating a patchwork of M4D-interfaces between citizens, civil society and the state.

Simultaneously, a decline of elite-directed forms of participation paralleled with an increase of elite-challenging forms of participation can be noted. It is performed by critical citizens challenging hierarchical institutions on new, global venues enabled by information and communication technology (ICT) (Cornwall & Coelho 2007, Inglehart 1999, Norris 1999, Warren 2002). In Uganda, where almost 100 percent of the population is covered by a mobile phone network and where at least theoretically half the population 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 participation (Hellström 2010).

Ushahidi has become a well-known crowdsourcing crisis information tool. It makes it possible for citizens to report incidents via SMS, mail, Twitter and other channels, and plot these on an online map. Crowdsourcing as a tactic has become an option for utilising collective power and has become a buzzword in development and the humanitarian sector. In the past few years it has been widely used as an election-monitoring tool.

In Uganda, the organization Citizen Election Watch - IT (CEW-IT) set up a customized version of the Ushahidi platform called Uchaguzi, which was used to monitor incidences of electoral offences. In addition, the organization Democracy Monitoring Group (DEMGroup), a coalition of four civil society organizations developed another citizen reporting platform (UgandaWatch) built on top of Drupal. The two organizations DEMGroup and CEW-IT collaborated so that all messages was sourced into UgandaWatch. In total, more than 10'000 messages was sent via SMS to 6090, reporting on various issues such as voter buying, registration hiccups, inappropriate campaign conduct, cases of violence, general complaints or positive feedback.

To DEMGroup, funded by the North-European donor program Deepening Democracy Programme with technical assistance from the American organization National Democratic Institute (NDI), the citizen reporting service served as an extension to their tradition of formal election observation. In addition to the crowdsourced platform UgandaWatch, DEMGroup mobilized almost 6'000 nonpartisan citizen election observers countrywide. Using SMS to gather data from the observers, parallel vote tabulations provided an independent vote count as a check on the Electoral Commission (DEMGroup 2011).

Crowdsourcing via mobile phones, especially within the field of for political and human rights, is a rather new phenomenon. This means that existing research and academic articles on the topic is limited. DEMGroup, taking on the task of a large-scale two-folded SMS-enabled election observation and citizen reporting, is therefore a relevant case to further expand the knowledge on the opportunities and challenges of mobile-enabled political participation.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Crowdsourcing

It is believed that new technologies can play a role in good governance and that mobile phones can facilitate transparency and accountability (Avila et al 2010). This is particularly true when technology is not only seen as a an information and transparency tool, which process, disclose and disseminate information, but also as a tool using the revealed information for accountability purposes and to encourage participation.

Crowdsourcing, which involves outsourcing a specific task to a large group of people, is a good example of a tool that enables distributed interaction (many-to-many interaction between users and ICT distributed across geographical space and in time) (Donner 2010), In this research context, crowdsourcing allows regular citizens to report election irregularities, via online and mobile technology (e.g. SMS, voice, instant messages, Twitter, mail) to a centralized server. The data collection can either be carried out through open crowdsourcing (i.e. more informal, citizen generated data where "everyone" is allowed to submit reports via online and mobile technology), through bounded crowdsourcing (i.e. a more systematic and organized method that trained volunteers, workers or observers undertake) or from a combination of both (Avila et al 2010, Joyce 2010). UgandaWatch constitutes a good example of open crowdsourcing and DEMGroup's 6'000 citizen election observers an example of bounded crowdsourcing.

Mobile election monitoring through open and bounded crowdsourcing has taken place in a number of sub-Saharan African countries, including Benin (2011), Burundi (2010), Kenya (2010), Nigeria (2011), Sudan (2010), Uganda (2011) and Zimbabwe (2008). Despite these seemingly "successful" initiatives, the real impact of crowdsourcing is under debate and a number of risks have been identified (Currion 2010, Morozow 2011, Joyce 2010). The risks include information overload caused by unverified data, inaccurate information, threats to citizens' privacy and security when reporting. Further, using crowdsourced data for monitoring elections can be problematic because there might be incentives for certain citizens to manipulate data and "the accuracy of such reports is impossible to verify" (Morozov, 2011 p. 271).

2.2 Democracy and Participation

As realistic and sparse conceptions of democracy, represented by political theorists like Joseph Schumpeter (Schumpeter 2008) and indexes like Freedom House (Freedom House 2011), have gained ground, one might link this development to a political disengagement among citizens. This procedural view of democracy does simply not seem to be compatible with an active, engaged and participatory citizenry. On the contrary, Mark E. Warren argues that the "increasing disaffection from formal political institutions appears to be paralleled by increasing attention toward other ways and means of getting things done" (Warren 2002: 682). What tends to be interpreted as the disengaged citizen, is instead a citizen increasingly critical in her evaluation of governments (Warren 2002: 680 f.). In line with this, Pippa Norris suggests that there "is growing tension between ideals and reality. This may have produced the emergence of more 'critical citizens' or perhaps 'disenchanted democrats'" (Norris 1999: 27). Turning to World Values Survey, Ron Inglehart notes that although "hierarchical political parties are losing control over their electorates, and elite-directed forms of participation such as voting are stagnant or declining, elite-challenging forms of participation are becoming more widespread…" (Inglehart 1999:236) This erosion of political support to government institutions is thereby not accompanied by an erosion of democratic values. Instead, citizens "'who feel that existing channels for participation fall short of democratic ideals, and who want to improve and reform the institutional mechanisms of representative democracy" (Norris 1999: 27) have the potential to strengthen democracy. Such participation may be channeled through the new, global venues of participation enabled by ICT.

Although some of these trends have primarily been noted in Western contexts, they are very much relevant to the emergence of citizen reporting and election observation. As we will note in the results' section, Warren's idea of citizens' disaffection from formal political institutions and the interest in other channels, will be supported by our findings. In the UgandaWatch case, a significant amount of users had turned to citizen reporting, in spite of not participating in the actual voting or through traditional channels. Thus, in line with what Norris suggests, citizens turning away from traditional forms of participation in favor of mobile-

enabled ones, is not necessarily a sign of disengagement. Instead it may be read as a citizens' critique towards traditional channels for participation, such as the act of voting. The noted tension between ideals and reality is also surfaced in citizen reporting and observation. It becomes clear that citizens do envision an ideal electoral process as free and fair, and when they notice this not being the case, they find channels such as citizen reporting and election monitoring to act on it.

2.3 Incentives and Political Equality

What drives them to participate and what hinders them? Using the theories of collective and selectives we will seek to understand the nature of this new form of participation in crowdsourced platforms.

The *paradox of participation* states that a rational citizen will not participate. One's inputs do not correspond with a significant probability that one's participation will have an actual impact. Outcomes of participation also being public goods, available to anyone and not exclusive for the participant, should further decrease the incentive to participate. Yet, citizens do participate. (Olson 1965).

The offered solutions to the paradox can be divided into two categories; collective and selective incentives. The conception of collective incentives is based on the participant's belief, her subjective assessment, of whether she can affect the outcome and that the outcome is meaningful and effective (Bäck et. al. 2006). Finkel and Muller argues that individuals will participate in protests when they are unsatisfied with the collective goods provided by the governing, when they believe that collective action can be successful and when they believe that their own participation can help determine the success of the collective action (Finkel & Muller 1998). The selective incentives on the other hand, are constituted by advantages accessible only to the participant and gained regardless of the outcome of the participation. Access to resources will also affect participation. Bäck et. al. notes that the "costs associated with participation may actually be seen as selective 'disincentives'" (Bäck et. al. 2006: 55).

Political participation is usually discussed in quantitative terms, and often 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). 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). Perhaps challenged by the difficulties in measuring impact of crowdsourcing (and ICT in development in general, see UNCTAD 2011), focus within the field has been to increase the output- the number of text messages sent to crowdsourcing platforms. As Paul Currion put it: "it is a fallacy to think that if the quantity of information increases, the quality of information increases as well. This is pretty obviously false, and, in fact, the reverse might be true" (Currion 2010). Linking to the idea of political equality, the hunt for high statistics on usage may not be a sufficient parameter of judging success. If voices are being amplified through crowdsourcing, which usually are not being heard, small numbers may still have a positive impact in regard to political equality.

3. DATA AND SURVEY METHODOLOGY

In this study, we examine the nature of the opportunities and challenges when using mobile phones for participation. The analysis relies on three different sources of data:

1. SMS-survey of a randomized sample of Ugandan mobile phone users, selected from UTL and MTN numbers in Dmark Mobile's subscriber database.
2. SMS-survey of a sample of users of UgandaWatch.
3. SMS-survey of a randomized sample of DEMGroup election observers using SMS to monitor the elections..

These three samples represent populations, which all have experience of using mobile phones (i.e. the methodology is leaving out the mobile have-nots). This means that the respondents' barriers for using mobile phones for democratic participation should be lower than for an average Ugandan. In this sense, the samples may be regarded as most-likely samples, enabling generalization. Thus, the challenges identified through these samples will indicate a minimum level of challenges that the field of mobile phones for democratic participation is facing. However, in spite of all three samples having a certain level of mobile know-how, their respectively level and relation to mobile phones varies, thereby providing us with a spectrum of different levels of experience. The DEMGroup observers had received one to two days training in how to use mobiles for their participation, and were thereby expected to have the most experience. The UgandaWatch users had not received any training, but had in fact used mobile phones to participate when reporting into UgandaWatch, which put them in the middle of the spectrum. The average Ugandan mobile users were expected to have the least experience. Choosing these particular three groups was to further enable us to understand the nature of the opportunities and challenges when using mobile phones for participation. For example, were there similar challenges spanning over all populations, or do challenges tend do be specific in relation to the users' background? And do the different categories of users share the incentives for participating or are different groups attracted by differing reasons?

The SMS-surveys held six to ten questions, 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. It was also necessary for a respondent to reply to the question at hand, for the survey to proceed to the following question. The survey design, where a question had to be answered before receiving the following question, led to a dropping response rate during the course of each respondent's completion of the survey. All questions in all three surveys were tested on a group Ugandans with differing socio-economic background and thereafter modified, before finalized and sent to the samples. Dmark Mobile handled the administration of the surveys for the general public sample, and by Text to Change for the UgandaWatch crowd and the DEMgroup observers' samples. Dmark Mobile (www.dmarkmobile.com) is a leading premium Value Added Service content provider in Uganda and Text to Change (www.texttochange.org), also based in Uganda, run mobile facilitated health, economic development, education and accountability programs in sub-Saharan Africa and South America. Further details on each data set from the SMS-survey are provided in the following subsections.

3.1 General public

In March-April 2011 a short, structured questionnaire was administered to 112'381 unique Ugandan mobile numbers. We received 856 complete questionnaires, i.e. understandable replies on all five questions asked, representing a response rate of 0.76 percent. The response rate of the initial question of participation received a response rate of 2.78 percent, a percentage which then dropped throughout the survey. To increase the response rate, a reminder was sent to about 2'500 of the mobile numbers towards the end of the three-week survey period. This had a huge impact and increased the response rate with several hundred percent, from 122 completed questionnaires to 856.

We queried basic demographic information, but did not collect identifying information such as the respondent's name or address. The anonymous phone numbers were randomly selected from the subscriber database of Dmark Mobile. This means that the numbers receiving the questionnaire only belong to MTN and Warid, 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 politics and sport news indicate that the sample is not representative of the Ugandan population, but instead skewed in favor of young, urban men. This is also supported by the response rate of 73 percent men, though this may also have other contributing factors. Thereby, the sample cannot be said to represent the Ugandan population as a whole. Instead the sample can be viewed as a most-likely sample, in regard to having preferences in favor of using ICT. The sample being subscribers of SMS-services and the respondents being able to reply to the questions, mean that they have a certain level of ICT competence and experience of using their mobile phones in a diverse way. The sample, which we refer to as the "general public" is thereby not representative of the average Ugandan, but rather of the average ICT-savvy Ugandan.

3.2 UgandaWatch Crowd

In the beginning of March 2011 about 10'000 SMS had been sent to UgandaWatch. These numbers, from which the SMSs originated, represent the users- the crowd- of the citizen reporting SMS hotline UgandaWatch. From these numbers, a randomized selection of 1500 mobile numbers was made, to which we sent the first question of the questionnaire. 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 sample we ended up with, turned out to be an exceptionally dynamic one. Out of our randomized sample of 1500 mobile numbers, only a small minority of the replies we received came from the original sample. The rest came from numbers outside the original sample. It was also not the same numbers answering all questions, but numbers were lost and others were added throughout the 10-question survey. We identify two possible explanations of this. The first is that the replies we received do represent the original randomized sample. Given the Ugandan context where most people who have a SIM-card, not only use one but many (Heeks 2009, Hellström 2010), it is likely to believe that respondents may have received a question to one SIM-card, but then using another to reply. The second explanation is that the persons in the sample shared the survey with other people, who then also participated in the survey. In this case, we do not know whether they had used UgandaWatch and thereby we also do not know if they are representative of our population of UgandaWatch users. However, the first half of the questionnaire required experience from UgandaWatch in order to answer the questions. It is likely to believe that without that experience, the respondent might have sent "phony" answers, only pressing the number one, or sending empty SMSs for example. A qualitative review did not reveal data supporting this second explanation. Therefore we will assume that the sample is in fact representative for the UgandaWatch users.

The incentive introduced to the 500 numbers brought an actual gain to participating in the survey. This meant after introducing the incentive, there was a greater risk that people outside our population would respond, or that the same person would use multiple SIM-cards to respond to the survey. To limit this problem, after the incentive-SMS was sent, we only kept the replies coming from the original randomized sample. This meant an increased data loss, but possibly a more qualitative sample. The result of our efforts was that 148 mobile numbers answered at least one of the questions, not including the initial question regarding informed consent. This represents a response rate of 9.98 percent. Even the last question, which had the lowest response rate, had a rate of 9.27 percent. However, only 29 numbers, 1.93 percent, 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 of the survey proceeding.

3.3 DEMGroup Election Observers

During the general elections, DEMGroup deployed close to 6'000 observers to use mobile phones for Election Day observation. A month after, we conducted a SMS-survey sent to 2'000 out of the population of 6'000 observers. Using one reminder to almost 1'000 of the numbers, as well as the same incentive as to the crowd to another 1'000 numbers, resulted in a response rate of 43.05 to 16.55 percent with the response rate gradually dropping towards the last questions.

Only a very small minority of the replies came from numbers outside our original sample, contrasting the dynamic sample of the UgandaWatch users. To a large extent, the respondents also followed the instructions given, as opposed to the UgandaWatch survey where it was common for respondents to answer more freely to the questions. The one to two-day training in SMS-observation that all DEMGroup observers had received may explain the relatively high response rate, the respondents' ability to follow instructions as well as using the same SIM-card to reply throughout the survey.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Spreading the Word

Despite a fairly big marketing budget mainly used on radio and newspaper adverts, flyers and t-shirts, a third to almost half (32-41 percent) of the sample "general public" had never heard of UgandaWatch. 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. Out of those who had heard of UgandaWatch, 44 percent had learned about it through the radio, followed by 19 percent through newspapers and 16 percent through friends.

The numbers were very similar among the users of UgandaWatch, with only a few percent less learning about it through radio and a

couple of more percent finding out through their friends. The flyers had a bigger impact among the users where 8, as opposed to 2 percent among the general public, learned about UgandaWatch through flyers. It stands clear that radio promotion had the single largest impact for spreading the word about the SMS-service, but that newspapers and social networks also constituted important channels.

4.2 Why (Not) Participate through SMS?

4.2.1 Incentives and Disincentives

Among the general public, the top-two reasons for not using UgandaWatch were not having heard of it, as well as not having anything to report. More than a fifth, 22 percent, of those not using UgandaWatch did not use it because they had nothing to report. Less than 10 percent reported that they felt it was too unsafe. Only 6 percent did not use UgandaWatch, because of lack of the resources time or money.

The single biggest reason for the crowd's participation through UgandaWatch, was to "Help my country", a reason stated by a vast majority of 72 percent of the crowd's answers. The second biggest reason, constituting 14 percent of the answers, was to "Get help" followed by 11 percent 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 DEMGroup observers constitute a somewhat different category, since they were not asked about the SMS-enabled participation through UgandaWach, but instead of the more bounded crowdsourcing for election observers. However, with 67 percent of the answers stating they chose to observe to help their country, they seem to share their primary driving force with the UgandaWatch crowd. Two other strong selective incentives also emerged among the observers. Career opportunities was mentioned by 10 percent, and 15 percent stated the access to first-hand information as their reason for observing.

The number one challenge, which the crowd met in using UgandaWatch, was the cost. A third of the answers express that the cost of 100 Uganda shillings was an obstacle and almost as many, 28 percent, stated a challenge being the lack of the effect of the SMS or that they did not receive a reply from UgandaWatch. Because of the issues regarding the sample, mentioned previously in Data and Survey Methodology, a bivariate analysis tracking the possible correlation between those stating they used UgandaWatch to get help and those describing it as a challenge that the SMS had no effect, was not possible to perform. However, it seems likely that those looking to get help may also see it as a challenge when they experience that their SMS had no effect. The percentage among the crowd stating safety as a challenge for using UgandaWatch, was only slightly higher at 11 percent, compared to the general public. Only 6 percent of the DEMGroup observers stated safety as an obstacle. Network issues constituted 12 percent of the crowd's challenges, and as many as 56 percent of the observer's challenges. In spite of the attained one- to two days training, 6 percent of the observers experienced issues with their handset or SMS format as a challenge to their participation.

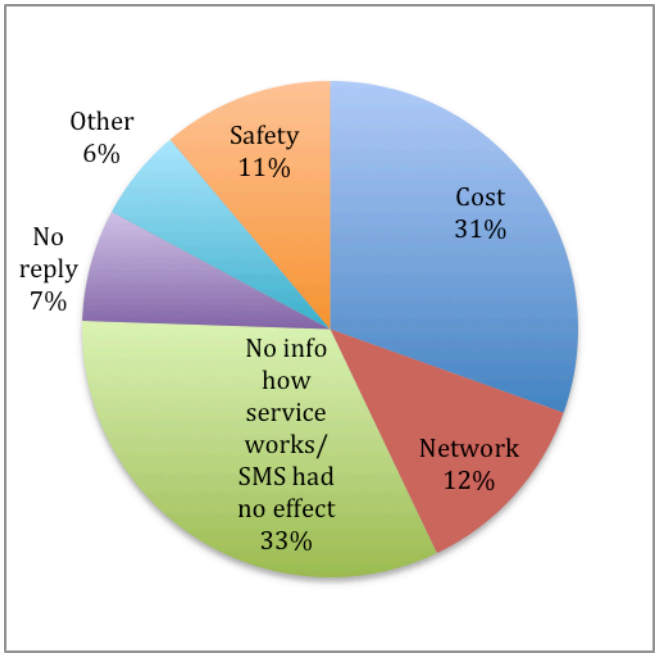

Figure 1 Challenges among UgandaWatch Crowd in using SMS for participation

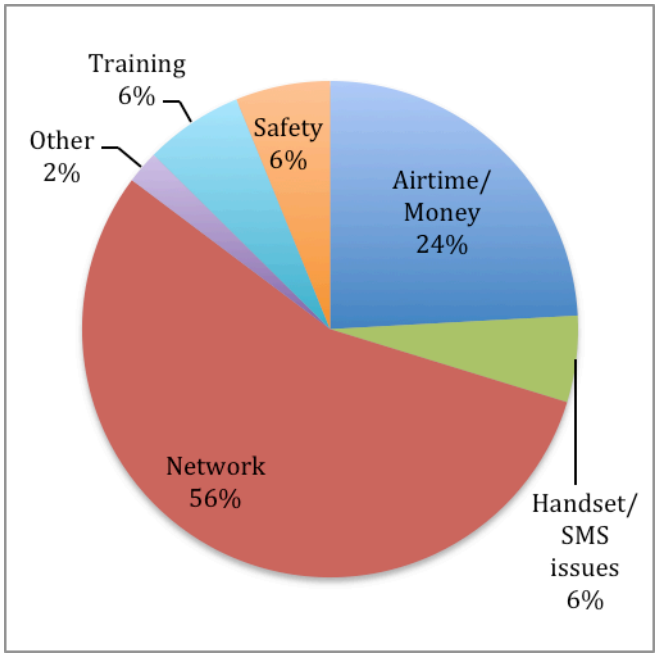

Figure 2 Challenges among DEMGroup Observers in using SMS for participation

4.2.2 Venues for Participation

The two main components of the UgandaWatch are the SMS hotline and the website linked to the hotline. Our survey, however, showed that the same users do not necessarily use the two components. Almost half of the crowd had never visited www.ugandawatch2011.org, more than a third had visited it via a

mobile and only about a fifth had visited the website on a computer.

When asked about the best methods for democratic participation (see Figure 1 below), a steady majority of 57 percent of the general public's answers expressed a preference for traditional means as public meetings, whereas a scant majority of 46 percent of the crowd preferred public meetings. The result was very similar among the DEMGroup observers, where 51 percent preferred public meetings. Only 37 percent of the general public's answers mention any of the ICT-enabled methods, among the crowd the ICT-preference was about the same, whereas among the DEMGroup observers the preference was somewhat stronger at 45 percent. The particular ICT-preference differs among the three groups, though. Whereas the general public has a strong preference in favor of calling into radio shows, both the crowd and the observers have instead a strong preference towards SMS-participation.

Furthermore, it is possible that a skewness in favor 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 percent of the respondents did actually state several methods, and to limit the problem of skewness, all their stated alternatives were included in the results.

A vast majority, 61 percent, of the crowd state that they are not involved in a civic organization and 15 percent state that they did not vote in any of the elections. Due to tendencies of responding in accordance with the anticipated norm, it is likely to believe that both, and especially the latter, percentages underestimate the actual non-participation of elections and in civic organizations.

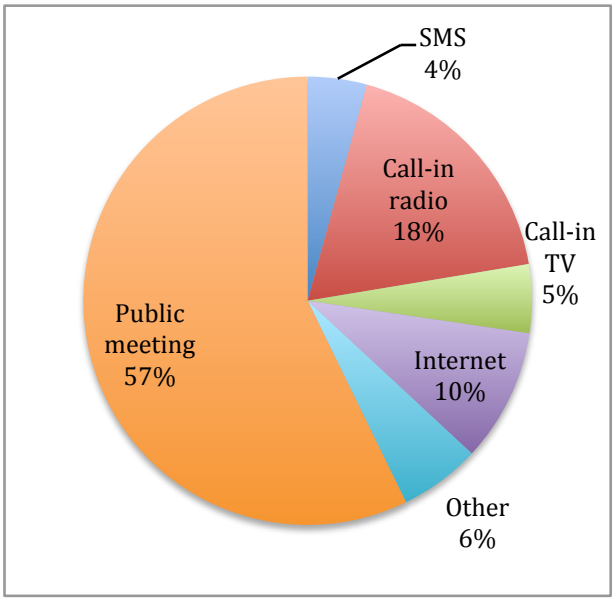

Figure 3 Preferred method for democratic participation among general public

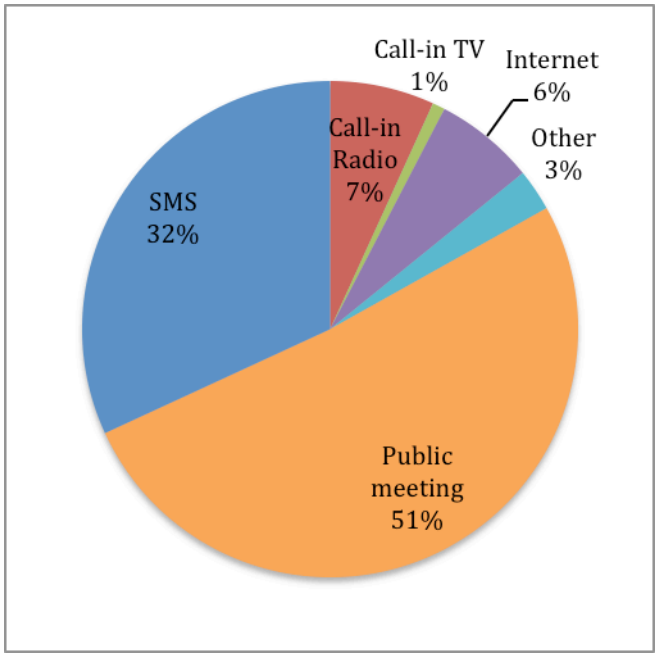

Figure 4 Preferred method for democratic participation among DEMGroup Observers

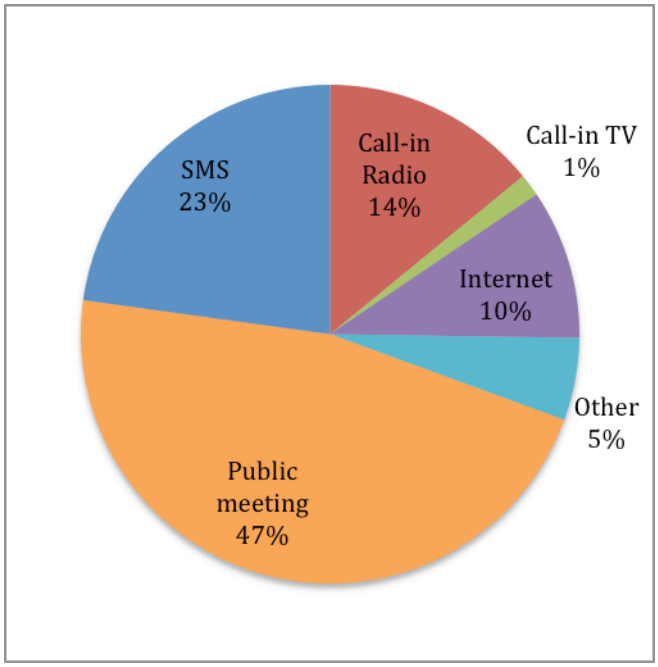

Figure 5 Preferred method for democratic participation among UgandaWatch Crowd

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Marketing

The fact that more than a third up to almost half of the general public had never heard of UgandWatch illustrates the challenge of

marketing SMS-services, as well as the implications of non-existent meta-information for the end user of mobile services (as opposed to the internet user and available search engines). It is clear that radio was the single most important channel for marketing. Out of those in the general public who had heard about UgandaWatch, almost half of them learned through the radio and among the users of UgandaWatch percentage was nearly as high. With as many hearing about the SMS hotline through friends as through newspapers, it seems as if the impact of the word of mouth, and social networks, was underestimated in the marketing plan. This suggests that by for example using DEMGroup's 6'000 observers as ambassadors for UgandaWatch or by spreading the word of UgandaWatch through the member organizations of DEMGroup, some of them with a very extensive grassroots network, the knowledge of UgandaWatch would have been higher.

A large proportion, a fifth, of the general public non-users stated that their lack of use of UgandaWatch was due to the fact that they had nothing to report. The question of the meaning of this arises.. Does it mean that people only consider severe irregularities such as violence as something to report, rather than also to report when the electoral process is performed accurately? The former view may have been promoted by the framing of UgandaWatch as a hotline to text when something "irregular" is observed, and that UgandaWatch is an actor who "investigates" (UgandaWatch 2011). The perception of not having anything to report also raises questions regarding civic education. Are citizens aware of their rights and what to demand from an electoral process? Combining the establishment of a SMS hotline with a multi-channeled voters' education campaign, proved successful in Mozambique in 2009 (Aker, Collier & Vicente 2011). This suggests that not only informing potential UgandaWatch users to report on irregularities, but to further emphasize what such irregularities might be, could have increased citizens' perception of having something to report, thus also increasing participation.

5.2 Dis(Incentives)

Surprisingly, in the shed of all the theories pointing to lack of resources as an obstacle -a disincentive- for participation, only a small percentage of the general public reported they did not use UgandaWatch because of lack of time or money. Simultaneously, more than a third of the crowd stated cost as a challenge for using UgandaWatch. Also, a quarter of the DEMGroup observers experienced cost as a challenge. In other words, among those who were not using UgandaWatch, the cost was not a reason for avoiding the service. However, among those participating in an SMS-enabled observation, the cost did constitute an obstacle. A way to understand this could be that the users of UgandaWatch may have used the service several times, and that the accumulated cost thereby constitutes an obstacle for participation.

About 70 percent of both the UgandaWatch Crowd and the DEMGroup observers stated that helping their country was an important reason for participating. It is very possible that the percentage is somewhat inflated compared to the respondents' actual incentives, due to respondents' willingness to answer accordingly to the norm of being a "good citizen". Nevertheless, this effect should be limited by the opportunity for the respondents to state multiple reasons. Also the SMS-methodology not involving the respondent being faced by an interviewer, but instead anonymously answering through their mobiles to an unknown recipient, should limit the issue. In other words, "helping one's country" seems to be a significant reason for people to use UgandaWatch.

It is difficult to break down this expressed will of contributing to the greater good into a collective or a selective incentive. If helping one's country is linked to a sense of duty, it is a selective incentive, a perceived individual gain regardless of the outcome of the participation.. Is it, on the other hand, linked to the assessment of the impact of the participation, the incentive rather falls into the category of collective incentives. Evidently, it is a strong driving force, but more qualitative research would be needed in order to understand its nature. Comparing to studies on participation carried out in Europe the finding of this incentive is somewhat surprising. Duty as a selective incentive is rarely found in studies exploring participation in the North. When it comes to collective incentives, it has mostly been found in regard to protest activities (Bäck et. al. 2006). Possibly, this illustrates a contextual difference, where Ugandans due to for example political and historical context have a stronger sense of duty and preference in favor of collective incentives than citizens of north Europe. The comparison with previous studies is however not fully satisfying, since those have focused on other kinds of participation. Whereas for example campaigning activities or protests is a very direct form of participation, using SMS to monitor- to guard- an electoral process is rather a form of meta-participation. It is a form of participation directed at improving the system, which in its turn -hopefully- is meant to ensure a free and fair election. It is therefore possible that the noted difference in preferences is not contextual, but instead linked to the specific form of participation.

Among the DEMGroup observers, a third of the answers to why the observers chose to participate were related to various selective incentives. Not very surprisingly some viewed it as a career opportunity. More surprising was that "access to first-hand information" was the largest category of the selective incentives mentioned. Commonly known incentives mentioned in the literature on participation are money, gaining friends or having fun (Bäck et. al. 2006). To choose to participate in order to access first-hand information is undoubtedly a gain of participation, which is accrued by the participant alone and regardless of the outcome of the participation. Accordingly, it should be classified as a selective incentive. It is an incentive that holds a strong sense of distrust against the system and the traditional means of information, such as newspapers or TV. This link between distrust or social capital and the use of citizen reporting is at present a black hole in social sciences, and we strongly encourage further research on the topic.

On the theme of distrust and challenges, about 10 percent of the crowd and the general reported that they felt using the service was too unsafe. Only 6 percent of the DEMGroup observers stated safety as a challenge. Although not within the scope of our study, it is possible that the more formal role of being an official observer contributed to higher perception of safety. Across all three groups, it is however likely that those experiencing a high degree of unsafety using SMS for democratic purposes would not at all respond to a survey like this. The percentages may therefore indicate the minimum level of the potential magnitude of the issue of safety.

5.3 Closing the Feedback-Loop

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. Moreover, 14 percent 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" (Democracy Monitoring Group, CCEDU 2011) indicating that UgandaWatch is not an emergency number providing help, but rather a number to call for passing on information. On the other hand, UgandaWatch also emphasize that they "investigate" as well as report to the police and the Electoral Commission (UgandaWatch 2011). This implies that the service may actually provide help. The communication of the purpose of UgandaWatch was, in other words, unclear. This is also emphasized by the 28 percent 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 open crowdsourcing services in Uganda. With UgandaWatch being the pioneering large-scale service it is possible that those, whose expectations were not met will reject future attempts. This also illustrates a serious concern with open crowdsourcing - not giving a clear message on what the gathered data aims at achieving. This is understandable at the initial innovative boom of such platforms. However, at this stage, actors setting up open crowdsourcing platforms should be able to articulate the goal of the service. If the actors themselves are not clear on the purpose, how can the users be expected to understand the medium?

A significant proportion of mobile phones deployed in Uganda are web-enabled, and Internet connectivity comes with the mobile phone connectivity. This became evident when finding that the vast majority of those actually visiting the website did it via a mobile phone. However, almost half of the UgandaWatch crowd never visited the website (if this was by choice or by the fact that majority had no access to Internet we do not know). This means that they were not a part of the information loop of giving and receiving information, they did not participate in a potentially deliberative dialogue. Instead, they fed data into the system without following up or possibly even knowing where their information ended up.

5.4 Multiple Channels

Across all three groups of general public, UgandaWatch crowd and DEMGroup observers, half of the respondents 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 are not. Nevertheless, ICT- enabled methods appear to constitute a useful 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 not unlikely to believe that for the purpose of fighting corruption text messages may be preferred, whereas there might be a preference for public meetings regarding campaigning activities.

It is also worth noting that whereas only 3 percent of the general public found SMS being a good method for democratic participation, as many as 22 percent of the UgandaWatch users and 31 percent of the DEMGroup observers 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.

More than half of the DEMGroup observers, 56 percent, stated network issues as a challenge for their participation, among the UgandaWatch crowd 12 percent stated the same. This also emphasizes the importance of offering users multiple channels in order to enable participation. This becomes especially important in election contexts, which may be tense and therefore result in government interference or network overload.

5.5 Contributing to Political Equality

A vast majority of the UgandaWatch crowd stated that they were not involved in civic organizations. It is of course possible that those not being involved in a civic organization use other means for participation, like signing petitions for example. However, civic organization is a fairly inclusive term including for example churches and community-based organizations. Conclusively, it seems as if this form of SMS-participation does attract also those who do not participate through 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 at least 15 percent of the UgandaWatch crowd did not vote also shows that UgandaWatch provided an additional channel to voting for participation in the electoral process. This interest of finding new elite-challenging channels for participation, support the conception of the contemporary critical citizen, noted by Inglehart, Norris and Warren among others. (Inglehart 1999, Norris 1999, Warren 2002).

6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Strategic and Educational Marketing

Both when turning to the general public and the actual users of UgandaWatch, it became evident that marketing was an issue, which had not been resolved to a satisfying extent. A large 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. A recommended strategy for marketing of SMS-services is to make the marketing informative as well as educational: to inform the public why the service should be used and how to use it.

6.2 Closing the Feedback-Loop and Using the Data

Closing the feedback loop turned out to be another important component. 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 crowdsourcing challenges when mostly low-end units, designed for voice and SMS-functions, are used as the only channel. When SMS is used 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. Just one and a half month before the election, confirmation SMSs were introduced to the UgandaWatch service. When a user had texted in an observation, he or she would receive a SMS from UgandaWatch 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". Our findings suggest that this was a meaningful development of the service, but that users are still craving for more - they want and expect action. However, action may at times demand access to more information. Although idea of taking action was

somewhat unclear in the UgandaWatch case, DEMGroup did make a great effort of accessing more information in order to verify the incoming reports. This was made by making callbacks to users as well as using the knowledge of local DEMGroup observers. The cost of this ambitious effort was a lag in the publication of reports. It is also unclear how the callbacks may have affected the trust among users that their identity was to be remained private. This illustrates the balance act of developing such services to better meet the needs, simultaneously as protecting the users and the foundation of their participation. Regardless of which path is chosen, actors setting up citizen reporting platforms need do decide if that is what they want too, and to communicate this decision to the users.

6.3 Using Multiple Channels

Given that the majority of those visiting the website did so through the mobile phone, it is crucial that websites are 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, emphasizes the need for additional feedback channels. For example, the existing geo-tagging of the SMSs, could for example have enabled 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. Without feedback or the experience that one's participation has some kind of result, there is a risk that users will argue that participation is meaningless 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, 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 reached UgandaWatch, but created a terrible backlog and the whole idea of publishing observations in near real-time was lost. This was also illustrated by the common problem among the UgandaWatch crowd, and the even more common problem among the DEMGroup observers, reporting that network issues did constitute a great obstacle to their participation. By integrating more channels, such as a call-in function, Facebook and Twitter, the service would become more solid. A related issue is the fact that SMS are permanent records, stored by the operators and able to access by outsiders (i.e. government).. Because of this, some users might refrain from using a SMS-service when wanting to report sensitive information. Thus, a broader spectrum of channels for users 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 planning and implementation of a M4D-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 may offer for democracy and development.

7. FURTHER RESEARCH

The methodology used in this study meant focusing on various levels of mobile-savvy citizens. Using most-likely samples in regard to having preference for using mobile phones provided us with the opportunity of generalization. However, it also meant leaving out mobile have-nots or not using them to such a great extent. Although our findings suggest that the use of mobile phones may contribute to political equality, by attracting groups of people not usually participating, it is possible that it may also contribute to inequality. For example, what happens to groups already excluded from participation when yet another venue emerges that they do not have access to? More research is needed on the users of crowdsourcing tools, but also on the non-users.

Users described it as a challenge that their participation in UgandaWatch did not result in change. Simultaneously, the third most frequent reason for participating through UgandaWatch, was because there was nowhere else to turn. This indicates that a service like this fills an existing void. It would, however, be interesting to learn how citizen-reporting services measure up when filling this void. Do crowdsourcing services like UgandaWatch meet the need of the users? Moreover, few efforts have been made to examine the impact of crowdsourcing in election contexts. An attempt is Aker et. al. who investigated the impact of citizen reporting and civic education on citizens' level of information and voters' activity (Aker et. al. 2011). This is a promising development of moving from focusing output to actual impact, and understanding the effects of crowdsourcing in elections. The impact of crowdsourcing on the quality of the actual electoral process, i.e. fraud and other irregularities, still remains highly unclear.

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