# Uchaguzi:

## A Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis of ICTs, Statebuilding, and Peacebuilding in Kenya

ICTs, Statebuilding & Peacebuilding in Eastern Africa

# UCHAGUZI:
## A QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF ICTS, STATEBUILDING, AND PEACEBUILDING IN KENYA

**Authors:** Warigia Bowman, Bob Bell, Wambui Ngugi, Wainaina Mungai, Grace Githaiga, and Paola Cavallari

**Released:** February 27, 2015

*This is a working paper.*

**The ICTs, State-building & Peacebulding in Eastern Africa Project:**

This working paper is part of a larger project run by the Center for Global Communication Studies (CGCS) at the University of Pennsylvania, conducted in partnership with the Programme in Comparative Media Law and Policy (PCMLP) at the University of Oxford, and funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY). This project seeks to bring greater clarity about the expectations and the realities of the use of communication technologies in developing contexts. In media and development theory, policy, and practice, strong normative statements about the transformative power of ICTs have often clouded the understanding of how people and communities actually make sense of, and engage with, the old and new communication technologies that surround them. Under this framework, this two-year project explores the use of ICTs in Eastern Africa.

*This report was made possible (in part) by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The statements made and views expressed are solely the responsibility of the authors*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What do scholars know about the internet, social media, and other ICTs in African elections? Information on the role electronic media plays in politics on the African continent is limited, with little scholarly work empirically examining the role of electronic media in African elections. In this report, we focus specifically on crowd-sourced publics in the Kenyan context. We intend to contribute to literature on ICT4D and governance, particularly highlighting the potential and limitations of non-profit ICT-using intermediaries and their work to re-define the relationship between citizens and the State.

Throughout this report, we center on questions about the role of the crowdsourcing initiative *Uchaguzi*. This inquiry examines technical challenges, the organization's ability to catalyze responses to reports of violence, the organization's connection with the media establishment and the wider public as well as *Uchaguzi's* overall role in strengthening electoral transparency and accountability.

To address these questions, we employed mixed methods involving both qualitative and quantitative analyses as well as field methods and desk research. Data collection focused on review of documentary sources in addition to collection of both qualitative and quantitative data. Empirical and qualitative sources included fourteen semi-structured qualitative interviews with founders, designers, and implementers. We also conducted a short survey to assess citizens' familiarity with *Uchaguzi*, reaching a total of 446 people and covering most regions in Kenya.

## MAJOR FINDINGS

The following are the major conclusions drawn from our mixed methods evaluation and analysis of the design and deployment of *Uchaguzi*:

- **The *Uchaguzi* platform was technically sound**. Our interviews verified the number of messages received. *Uchaguzi* received approximately 8,000 reports, of which 5,200 were processed. In addition, 2,700 reports required responses. In several cases, people used the platform in some innovative ways for which there had not initially been a plan (e.g., some users asked for directions of where to go and vote).
- **While visions of the platform's impact were clear, there was a lack of clarity amongst program implementers on identifying target populations of "end users":**

Average citizens, election monitors, and government services were identified as possible targeted users of the service.

- **The short code presented a challenge for *Uchaguzi's* publicity efforts**. There were numerous short codes in competition with each other at the time of the election, which may have diluted the number of people who used *Uchaguzi*.

***Uchaguzi* eventually leveraged media partners for publicity**. Supporters of the platform and members of the NGOs working with *Uchaguzi* successfully reached out to their members and citizens around the country in order to publicize the platform. Publicity about *Uchaguzi* for the 2013 election was more thorough than for the 2010 referendum. However, publicity efforts for the last election could be characterized as sporadic and late. Despite the lack of a comprehensive outreach to media, in the heat of the election, both domestic and international media began to rely on reports from *Uchaguzi* as a source of information on the election.

- ***Uchaguzi* did not form robust partnerships with security agencies and police authorities.** Communication with security agencies and the police was late, and not sufficiently intensive.
- ***Uchaguzi's* partnership outreach was sporadic and limited both geographically and linguistically.** Sporadic meetings were held with partners (SODNET, *Ushahidi* and Hivos, IEBC and police). Most announcements, trainings, and advertising were Nairobi-centric and conducted in English.

## INTRODUCTION

In early 2013, a partnership of civil society organizations launched *Uchaguzi*,[1] a crowd-sourcing platform designed to help Kenya achieve a free, fair, peaceful, and credible general election (Elections were held on March 4, 2013) by allowing Kenyans to monitor the voting process and report on significant incidents in real-time via SMS. Sponsors and funders have claimed that the platform received about 8,000[2] messages from ordinary citizens from around the country during the election. According to final statistics from the situation room, 5,200 were actual reports, and 2,700 of those reports were verified and needed responses.[3] According to the stated program

[1] *Uchaguzi* is the Kiswahili word for elections.
[2] Respondents 3, 6, 9
[3] Respondents 3, 9, 11, 14

objectives, the *Uchaguzi* crowd-sourcing platform sought to monitor trends as citizens reported instances of political violence and electoral malpractices in real time via SMS.[4]

Our research intent is to understand both the supply-side constraints to the deployment of the service as well as public demand as demonstrated by levels of public access to and understanding of the Uchaguzi platform. This project focused on three major research questions in order to tackle these issues. First, in which manner and why did Kenyan citizens use platforms such as *Uchaguzi* to report electoral problems? Second, was the platform used in the way originally intended by project designers and Uchaguzi implementers? Finally, by analyzing usage statistics from our surveys (the demand side) as well as the intentions and reflections of project implementers (the supply side), we sought to examine whether *Uchaguzi* was deployed as a crowd-seeding (placing monitors on the ground to collect data) or a crowd-sourcing (collecting info from the public) platform. In other words, did the bulk of the information come from Uchaguzi affiliated observers or from the public? As part of this report's objectives, we then sought to understand the implications for future election-monitoring projects if we consider *Uchaguzi* as being one system or the other? Does the *Uchaguzi* project suggest that either crowd-sourcing or crowd-seeding work more effectively in this context?

The core goal of this research is to examine *Uchaguzi* as a case study in an effort to determine the strengths and weaknesses of using such platforms for election monitoring and to understand best practices in order to maximize sustainability and effectiveness. This research seeks to contribute to the broader field of ICT4D and governance, particularly highlighting the potential and limitations of non-profit ICT-using intermediaries and their work to re-define the relationship between citizens and the State.

## BACKGROUND: THE INTERNET, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND ELECTIONS IN AFRICA

What do scholars know about the Internet, social media, and other ICTs in African elections? Information on the role electronic media plays in politics on the African continent is limited,

[4] http://sitroom.uchaguzi.co.ke/2013/03/04/uchaguzi-overview-report-for-march-4-2013/

with little scholarly work empirically examining the ways in which information and communication technologies (ICTs) are used in the context of African elections. This section seeks to situate our study on Uchaguzi first within existing literature on the role of ICTs in democratization in general and then specifically on crowd-sourced publics in the Kenyan context.

Several scholars argue that the Internet can greatly assist citizens in challenging non-democratic regimes and improving transparency and accountability in democratizing contexts. As Fung, Gilman, and Shkabatur have observed, technology scholars tend to be optimistic about the transformative possibilities of ICT for democracy (Fung, Russon Gilman, & Shkabatur, 2013b). Cyber-optimists believe that ICTs can lead to political liberation by serving as tools to increase citizens' political knowledge (Xenos & Moy, 2007). Beyond providing information, these scholars also postulate that ICTs may encourage political behavior in individuals while also enhancing political connectivity among individuals (Fraga, 2007).

Many studies seek to evaluate the effects of the Internet on political participation, especially within the context of elections in the United States. Feezell, Conroy, and Guerrero (2009) examine online political group membership facilitated through Facebook during the 2008 US elections and find that it predicts offline political participation.[5] Kelly Garrett (2006), in a 2004 study on US elections, finds that ICTs can help organizations more effectively pool acts of support, such as canvassing and phone-banking volunteers. Tolbert and McNeal (2003) show that individuals with access to the internet as well as online election news were more likely to vote in the 1996 and 2000 US presidential elections.[6]

Scholars also argue that ICTs may facilitate collective action and organization by political groups. Krueger (2006) provides support for the expectation that politically-interested

[5] The offline political participation scale included "measures of whether the subject voted in 2008, plans to vote in the 2010 election, tried to persuade someone to vote, donated money to a political candidate or campaign, worked as a paid employee for a candidate or campaign, worked as a volunteer for a candidate or campaign, attended a political rally, stuck a campaign sticker on window or car, participated in a boycott, and signed a petition" (Feezell, Conroy, and Guerrero 2009, p. 11n1). The research also found that online group participation did not increase political knowledge as measured by a knowledge scale including measures for a correct response to 11 questions (e.g., which party holds the majority in the House of Representatives, vote required to override a Presidential veto, etc.).

[6] This relationship did not hold for the 1998 midterm elections, suggesting that the internet may not overcome low profile contests with low public interest (Tolbert & McNeal, pp. 179-80).

individuals are more likely to receive both online and offline political messages. Shirky observes that text messaging has been used in several contexts to effectively to organize political protests against leaders (Shirky, 2011). Tufekci and Wilson (2012) note that, when controlling for other factors, social media use greatly increased the odds that a respondent attended Egypt's Tahrir Square protests on the first day.[7]

There is, however, a darker side to this equation, as cyber-technologies can be and have been used by governments to enhance surveillance and control communication (Deibert & Rohozinski, 2010; Shirky, 2011). Several governments, authoritarian and democratic alike, have endeavored to bring this new medium under the same tight regimen as other non-electronic media by use of laws and regulations (Rodan, 1998). Increasingly, authoritarian governments attempt to suppress political activity by controlling the internet. In some cases, authoritarian governments have been willing to go so far as to shut off internet, cellular telephony, regular telephony, and television broadcasting in an effort to control protest and limit dissent (Bowman & Camp, 2013).[8]

Limited amounts of scholarly research have been conducted that provide empirical evidence for the direct impact of Facebook and text messaging on elections. Dale and Strauss (2009) present impressive evidence that impersonal, noticeable messages, including SMS or text messages, increase the likelihood that a voter will make it to the polls, even if the voter and the messenger are not socially connected. Malhotra, Michelson, Rogers, and Valenzuela (2011) refine and extend Dale and Strauss's work, demonstrating that text messaging may be a key tool in voter mobilization during elections, lending support for Dale and Strauss's (2009) "noticeable reminder theory."

There have been some studies conducted to empirically examine ICTs in politics and elections in the African context. Catie Bailard conducted a seminal study in the lead up to the 2010 Presidential Election in Tanzania. Using a control group of sixty-five persons and an internet

[7] This is also the case for those who used Facebook, E-mail, and telephone to communicate about the protests.
[8] Iran and China are particularly restrictive with respect to internet use. Ethiopia and the Ivory Coast filter websites. During the "Arab Spring", Egypt cut its citizens off from the internet with similar blockades taking place in Burma, Nepal, and China. In addition to Egypt, Libya and Syria shut down internet and cellular telephony to suppress rebellion from 2011 to 2013.

group of fifty-nine persons, she specifically tested whether the internet influenced individuals' perception of the fairness of their election and subsequent recount (C. S. Bailard, 2012). Her work reveals that the internet negatively influenced individuals' perception of the fairness of both the election, and the subsequent recount. Specifically, her work finds that Facebook users were more likely to believe that the election was conducted unfairly. These findings suggest that more research is needed to explore the subtle pathways through which internet use may have a meaningful political impact.

Other scholars have worked to develop theoretical models to understand African online political spaces. Ligaga (2012) makes the important point that the internet, particularly in Africa, represents a relatively unmediated space of discourse, which is independent of mainstream media and fairly free of state-centric control. However, this space is also rife with contradictions, where Africans reconstitute hegemonic practices of ethnic prejudice and tribalist ideas. In synergy with Ligaga, Chisango and Gwandure (2011) assert that elections in Sub-Saharan Africa are characterized by "rhetoric and hate speech" against opposition parties, particularly on web blogs and internet media. Preliminary studies of the Kenyan election of 2007-2008 reveal that just as traditional information technologies such as the radio or print newspapers can spread various types of messages during election, ICTS can also serve as avenues for the distribution of both hate speech and peace speech (Ring, 2013; Pflanz, 2013; Erikson, 1986).

With regard to citizen sensors and volunteered geographic information (VGI) such as *Uchaguzi,* scholars have argued that these new technologies are likely to affect transparency and accountability interventions in incremental – as opposed to radical – ways. These theorists posit that such impact will probably be mediated by existing organizational infrastructure situated between citizens and the state instead of transforming the relationship between citizens and their governments (Fung et al., 2013b; Georgiadou, Lungo, & Richter, 2013). The collection of information by external agents has the potential to put pressure on state institutions to behave better (Felix, 2013, pp. 29-30). Increasing political accountability may require more "centralized users" who can use that information to increase responsiveness. It is expected that incremental changes used by ICT to amplify the voices of citizens may increasingly become impactful and

supplement the pre-existing aims of organizations and individuals (Fung et al., 2013a, p. 30; 2013b, pp. 44-45; Georgiadou et al., 2013, p. 1).

## METHODOLOGY

In seeking to examine the deployment of Uchaguzi from both supply and demand-side lenses, our research methodology sought to capture information from both stakeholders involved in the production of the service (funders, designers, and implementers) as well as the users (and potential users) of the service. Data was collected from both primary and secondary sources in an effort to enhance both internal and external validity. Documentary sources used included clippings from the national and international print and electronic media, government documents, and selective use of secondary sources. Empirical and qualitative sources included semi-structured interviews as well as surveys with non-users and self-identified users.

In order to uncover intentions, goals, and understandings of key individuals involved in the deployment and implementation of *Uchaguzi*, data collection focused on review of documentary sources in addition to fourteen semi-structured interviews with expert respondents (Merriam, 1988, p. 61) (*See* List of Contacts Successfully Interviewed). The team constructed a purposeful "snowball" sample of key designers, funders, and founders. The purposeful sample aims not to create a random, representative, or average pool, but to locate information-rich informants.

To assess the ways in which *Uchaguzi* was received and used by the public, surveys were conducted in more than thirty towns in fourteen counties, namely Nairobi, Kajiado, Narok, Kiambu, Murang'a, Nyeri, Embu, Garissa, Wajir, Nakuru Kisumu, Kisii, Makueni and Mombasa. Respondents were selected randomly from cyber cafes, offices, schools, markets, sporting areas, streets, and homes. Our team was able to survey a total of 446 people and covered most regions in Kenya. This survey is not large enough to be generalizable to the entire voting population because not all counties were covered. However, the results are certainly suggestive and provide insight into the average citizen's understanding of *Uchaguzi*.

# FINDINGS

The research conducted by our team strengthens the views of previous reports, adds nuance and detail to those projects, and also suggests areas for future research.

## ANALYZING THE SUPPLY SIDE: IMPLEMENTATION, COORDINATION AND PUBLICITY[9]

### *ORIGINS OF UCHAGUZI*

The timeline in this paper has been constructed from a combination of both desk research and interviews. The *Ushahidi* and *Uchaguzi* projects are inextricably linked. *Ushahidi* grew out of the post-election violence in 2007.[10] Violent events which occurred in the 2007-2008 Kenyan election were underreported or even unreported. This effect was amplified in areas outside of Nairobi. One of the main ideas of *Ushahidi* was to categorize incidents, geo-locate them, and archive them for further study. Beginning with 250 users, the site grew to 45,000 participants (Marsden, 2013, pp. 52-53).

According to the literature, *Ushahidi* can be a considered a model of "social monitoring" where public or civic organizations "deploy digital tools to enlist the eyes and ears of citizens to better spot public problems and so bring those problems to the attention of government and the broader public." Based on the concept of crowdsourcing, an unlimited number of participants make small, discrete contributions without monetary reward, amounting to a collective effort that exceeds traditional organizational arrangements in scope and time (Fung et al., 2013b, p. 42). *Ushahidi* was technically enabled by open source GIS and remote sensing technologies, as well as the increasing ubiquity of mobile phones in Kenya (and across Africa) (C. Bailard, Baker, Hindman, Livingston, & Meier, 2012, p. 6). As work on the *Ushahidi* platform continued, the developers realized the relevance of the platform, as well as its potential impact on elections. The peacebuilding tool *Uchaguzi* was a customization of the *Ushahidi* tool, and built upon lessons learned by *Ushahidi* after the 2007-2008 Kenyan election crisis.[11] With *Uchaguzi's* focus on political accountability, the project was more expansive in its strategic goals, seeking to incorporate institutional partnerships in addition to deploying the technology (Fung, Russon Gilman, & Shkabatur, 2013a, p. 27). Unlike *Ushahidi*, *Uchaguzi* developed partnerships with

[9] This analysis is incomplete. All of the qualitative interviews have been transcribed, sorted and coded, but not all the analysis is included in this draft. Future drafts will include the remainder of information gathered in interviews.
[10] Respondent 3
[11] Respondents 8, 10

NGOs and the Interim Independent Electoral Commission (IIEC). This new model was designed to help *Ushahidi* hold their partners – in particular, government entities – accountable to address election-related violence.

In March 2010, in anticipation of the referendum on the Constitution, the developers of *Ushahidi* thought about what they could do that would be "ahead of the curve."[12] The Social Development Network ("SODNET"), *Ushahidi*, and Hivos convened a roundtable on upcoming elections in East Africa and brought in groups like the Constitution and Education Reform Consortium ("CRECO") (Tanzania - 2010, Uganda - 2011, Kenya - 2013).[13] One key point discussed in the roundtable was the effective use of ICTs in election monitoring. From this roundtable, the idea of *Uchaguzi* (which means "election" in Swahili) was born (Omenya, 2013, p. 9).[14]

*Uchaguzi* was imagined as a partnership between a diverse group of organizations. The groups initially invited were Hivos, *Ushahidi*, CRECO, SODNET (TZ), Legal and Human Rights (UG), and ICTEW (a grantee of Hivos). Before the Kenyan 2010 Referendum, *Ushahidi* ran an ad for *Uchaguzi* in the Daily Nation, the country's most popular newspaper, explaining how to contribute information via SMS or *Uchaguzi's* website (Avila et al., 2010, p. 36). Through *Uchaguzi's* partners, the public, and 500 CRECO election monitors, 2,500 messages were created, leading to over 1,500 reports and 149 "actions taken," primarily by the CRECO network (Chan, 2012, p. 4).

In 2013, *Uchaguzi* was deployed for the 2013 Kenyan elections. Gaps relating to partnership commitments, technology, and communication were identified, leading to initial calls for volunteers as well as working group meetings in January 2013 (Omenya, 2013, p. 11). As with the earlier deployment in 2010, *Uchaguzi* reached out to a number of partner organizations. CRECO played the role of a traditional election monitoring organization; *Ushahidi* represented the technical side and were in charge of programming and technical assistance. Hivos acted as both facilitators and funders, while SODNET determined that they did not want to play as big a role in 2013 as they had played in 2010. According to our informants, the first brainstorming

[12] Respondent 3
[13] Respondents 3, and 7
[14] Hivos is a Dutch-based international development organization that works with local civil society organizations in developing countries in a number of thematic programs spanning Rights & Citizenship, Green Entrepreneurship, Expression & Engagement, and Action for Change. Its work with Ushahidi falls under its Expression and Engagement program and key focal area in Transparency and Accountability.

session was "huge," comprising citizens, NGOs, election monitoring agencies, and security entities.[15] The partnership needed tools with which to work, and the idea of *Uchaguzi* emerged from the partnership. According to one key founder "the partnership was the essence, not the platform. [As it turned out the] *Uchaguzi* platform came out of *Ushahidi*, but the partners could have decided that they wanted to use other tools."[16]

Although the initial brainstorming was highly effective, and marked the birth of *Uchaguzi*, the brainstorming also uncovered divisions between the collaborating organizations. The traditional election observation groups, such as National Democratic Institute ("NDI"), as well as the Institute for Electoral Democracy ("IED") pulled out. The Elections Observation Group had "one foot in" initially, but later pulled out.[17] There was a Secretariat of seven people at the inception of *Uchaguzi*, all of whom were Kenyan. The Secretariat included Greg Mwendwa, Philip Thigo, John Kipchumba, and Daudi Were, among others.[18]

One respondent from an NGO with significant experience in election monitoring in the *Uchaguzi* coalition discussed their experience working with *Uchaguzi* in the 2010 Constitutional referendum. As this respondent described, the technology was tested during the referendum, and had impressed donors and NGOs with its effectiveness.[19] This traditional election observation organization wanted a new way to cover elections. "We wanted to build [our] capacity to use ICT for good governance and human rights monitoring, and [believed the tool] would contribute to free, fair and credible elections."[20] The founders anticipated that the public, the government, and the media would use the information provided by *Uchaguzi* because the platform had trusted sources and verified reports.[21]

In election preparations, *Ushahidi* trained over two hundred volunteers and partnered with government agencies to serve as responders to reports of violence (Hyman, 2014, p. 28). They held more than fifty information sessions between January 4- March 4, 2010 and trained eleven teams, including SMS, Media Monitoring, Geolocation, Translation, Reports, Verification,

[15] Respondent 1
[16] Respondent 3
[17] Respondent 1
[18] Respondent 1
[19] Respondents 4 and 6
[20] Respondent 4
[21] Respondent 5

Analysis & Research, QA, Tech and Communications, and *Ushahidi* internal team chat (Omenya & Crandall, 2013, p. 2).

### *Visions of the Platform*

The initial premise underlying *Uchaguzi* was that there are problems with elections in Kenya, particularly with the lack of transparency. The designers of *Uchaguzi* hoped to improve the status quo by enhancing democratic expression and getting the everyday citizen involved. In this vision, scale was important. The main objective, then "was to ensure that Kenya have a free, fair and peaceful election. The goal was to return Kenyans to the heart of the election process and amplify election related incidents in near real time.[22] We wanted to turn every citizen into an election observer. . . . Each citizen could help protect the vote."[23] According to this conceptualization, if millions of users could be convinced to use *Uchaguzi* "election authorities [would know] that there were millions of eyes and ears on the ground, and arguably run a more credible election."[24]

One of the ideas upon which *Uchaguzi* was built was the concept that civil society organizations had the ability to collect information, but did not know what to do with it. According to a key member of the Secretariat, the goal of the organization was to collect as much data from as many people as possible, on anything relevant to the election. From there, the organization planned to take the data through a process to verify its credibility. Finally, the organization aimed to amplify the message, and bring it to the attention of relevant authorities.

Although there have been numerous monitoring and evaluation initiatives with regard to Kenyan elections, these efforts have been limited by duplication, delays in reporting results, and competition among non-governmental organizations for resources. Traditional election monitoring efforts generally "take forever to [release a] formal report, much of it shrouded in secrecy that by the time the report comes out, people have already moved on."[25] As a result, traditional election observation methods, argued the founders of *Uchaguzi*, were not as successful as they could have been in terms of enhancing government accountability in elections.

[22] Respondent 7
[23] Respondent 3
[24] Respondent 1
[25] Respondent 6

One respondent from one of the key election monitoring partners was excited by the concept of

> [getting] as many people in the grassroots countrywide to use the platform as a governance mechanism, to contribute to the devolved process of election monitoring, and to prevent electoral malpractice, and human rights violations.[26]

Our research suggests that the founders of *Uchaguzi* believed that they could use technology to increase participation in election observation and increase the role of the voting public in election monitoring. The two key goals of the platform during the inception stage were first, to find a way to enhance citizen participation in election observation and monitoring, and second, to generate real time reports on voting malpractices. In particular, traditional election observation methods have serious delays, and both citizens as well as civil society would benefit from more accessible, readily available election-related information. *Uchaguzi* founders believed that if they could generate real time reports on voting conditions, these reports could be seen both by electoral authorities and non-governmental organizations interested in ensuring free and fair elections.[27]

The hope was that citizens would be excited to have a source of election information that was an alternative to traditional media. In addition, the founders envisioned *Uchaguzi* as a place for citizens to receive feedback and responses to their concerns,[28] and hoped that *Uchaguzi* would serve as a forum to engage the public and provide empirical grassroots data to be used by election observers and journalists.[29]

### *Outreach, Publicity and Access*

A review by the researchers of the *Uchaguzi* website indicates that the site received approximately 3,812 reports from March 3-15, 2013. Other estimates are that *Uchaguzi* received 4,964 total and 2,699 verified reports. In a country with a population of approximately 43 million (World Bank, 2012) and a voting population of approximately 14 million (IFES, 2012), many scholars and outside reviewers have commented that the numbers of reports received by *Uchaguzi* users were relatively low, especially given the high prevalence of cellular telephony,

[26] Respondent 4
[27] Respondents 3, 4, 6, 7
[28] Respondents 5, 3, 7
[29] Respondent 5

with at least seventy-one percent of the Kenyan population having access to a cell phone (ITU, 2013).

Previous scholars who have studied *Uchaguzi* have suggested that the "rate of participation on platforms that are based on the original *Ushahidi* platform remained low and even reports that appeared on the platform seemed rarely to result in tangible actions in the field (Fung et al., 2013b, p. 43). " One respondent had an interesting take on this issue.

> Numbers were a lot lower than we anticipated, but violence was also a lot lower, and electoral malpractice was lower. To process those responses took a long time.[30]

When we began this research project, we considered the following alternative explanations. First was the possibility that the *Uchaguzi* platform was not widely used because the elections in 2013 proved to be relatively peaceful. An alternative, complementary explanation could suggest that reforms from the media establishment led to more balanced reporting and thus less participation and use of the *Uchaguzi* platform. Second was the possibility that *Uchaguzi* – like *Ushahidi* during the DRC crisis in 2008-09 – suffered from "the issue of fatigue among the locals (Ford, 2012, p. 35)."

We propose a much simpler analysis: low numbers of users are likely the result of general unfamiliarity with the platform by the Kenyan public. *Uchaguzi* is an innovative idea, based on sound technology. Nonetheless, the *Uchaguzi* project is comparatively new. It only began full operation in 2010. In addition, the team may have made an error by overselling their product in the beginning—most likely in an effort to attract much needed donor interest-- which then established a bar that was difficult to reach. In addition, the *Uchaguzi* organization may have underestimated the need for outreach and publicity. As one member of the Secretariat mentioned,

> We had such big plans. We wanted to have TV ads, t-shirts, billboards, and then reality checked in. There were no billboards in Kenya. As the election approached, the price went from 300,000 KSH [$4000 dollars] to 900,000 KSH [$10,000 dollars]. . . .You absolutely could not get an advert on the front page of a newspaper. You could not.[31]

[30] Respondent 14
[31] Respondent 3

Furthermore, "there was not a strong publicity plan."[32] Indeed, actual efforts at publicity fell far short of the grand ideas the organization had originally. Supporters of the platform and members of the NGOs working with *Uchaguzi* were asked to reach out to their members, and citizens around the country in order to publicize the platform. *Uchaguzi* also worked with *Tukarada* (which means "we are alert" in Kiswahili). *Tukarada* held peace concerts around the country, during which *Uchaguzi* shared their platform.[33]

At times, it seemed that this model worked well. For example, one of the coalition members put out a call for volunteers, specifically looking for regional and gender balance.[34] Hivos also nominated volunteers drawn from the region.

Unfortunately, the model used by *Uchaguzi* did not have many built in measures to ensure that coalition members delivered results. NGOs were taken at their word that they would leverage their networks to publicize the platform. For example, the organization leveraged partnerships with the Kenyan National Association for Peace. The organization claimed to have one million members, but actually had about 45,000 members.[35] One respondent stated that no effort was made to hold particular groups in the coalition accountable for publicizing *Uchaguzi* in the regions where their networks were the strongest. Further, several interviewees were skeptical that the grassroots efforts to publicize *Uchaguzi* were well-planned or effective. These interviewees noted that there was not a concerted effort to ensure that the entire country was covered.

Instead, "*Uchaguzi* banked on who was in the room, rather than reaching others."[36] The main way that the organization publicized the platform, according to a key secretariat member, was "through partnerships."[37] According to one respondent, "they asked NGOs to express interest, instead of looking for key parties." Several respondents felt that broader and more inclusive outreach was needed. One suggested that they should have carried out a capacity audit of

[32] Respondent 6
[33] One concern about the inadequacy of publicity uncovered during the research on this project was that Nairobi based, well-informed techno-literati we spoke with working at I-Hub, media houses, and even the Media Council of Kenya had only limited information about the platform, did not use it, and did not know anyone working with Uchaguzi. This confirms the idea mentioned by several respondents that publicity was inadequate.
[34] Respondents 3, 6, 9, 11
[35] Respondents 3,11, 12
[36] Respondent 1
[37] Respondent 3

organizations. In addition, several respondents indicated that they thought activities were not always carried out in a timely manner.

Publicity about *Uchaguzi* for the 2013 election was more thorough than for the 2010 referendum. In part, the founders aimed for citizens to learn about the platform from community organizations like Peacenet. There were ads, radio spots, posters, and leaflets publicizing *Uchaguzi*. Hivos distributed t-shirts and posters they had created and also got funding from the Royal Netherlands Embassy to produce radio spots in English and Swahili.[38] In addition, the platform was publicized through radio and television talk shows. However, *Uchaguzi's* publicity efforts for the last election could be characterized as sporadic and belated, with an unfortunately small presence on social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook.

An additional concern about publicity was that language barriers reduced participation, particularly in rural areas. All publicity efforts were conducted in English and to a far lesser degree, in Kiswahili. Kiswahili is a national language, but people's ability to fully utilize the language declines in more remote areas. One member of the Secretariat stated that the radio spots were translated into sixteen vernacular languages. However, a different team member in the Situation Room expressed concerns that *Uchaguzi* relied on the voluntary efforts of local residents to translate *Uchaguzi* outreach to various vernacular languages. Thus, these translations occurred on an ad-hoc basis, as they were dependent on voluntary efforts and expertise. In addition, the manual created by CRECO was only in English, and it was incumbent upon the observers and volunteers to translate the manual into the languages of the areas in which they were located as the need arose. CRECO tried to mitigate the problem of translation issues by recruiting observers local to the covered regions. However, no monitoring was conducted to determine how many and which languages were used. Advertisements in the print media were done exclusively in the *Nation*, and not in papers like *Citizen*, *People*, and *Star*. Furthermore, advertisements in print media were all in English. The map was also only available in English.

### *Relationships with the Media*

When this project was initiated, one of its goals was to cultivate a better understanding of the relationship between *Uchaguzi* and the mainstream media establishment. Previous literature has

[38] Respondents 3, 5, 8, 10

not adequately explored the coordinating mechanisms between the *Uchaguzi* organization and the media. Before this research was conducted, it was unclear how *Uchaguzi* intersected with, challenged, or amplified information from traditional media organizations. We specifically aimed to investigate this dynamic in the context of our fieldwork.

Initially, the designers of *Uchaguzi* believed that the media would use the platform as a source of news. However, the vast majority of respondents agreed that there was no concerted outreach effort towards the media.

> There was not a thought–out media strategy. There was contact with print media, with selected FM stations like Ghetto FM and QFM breakfast, but just a day or two before the election.[39]

Another respondent who was very close to the heart of the action in the situation room noted,

> We lacked a media communication strategy, and so gave the press releases and briefings late, and as separate organizations instead of as one united team representing the Uchaguzi platform.[40]

Rather, outreach focused on touching base with individual journalists who had relationships with people involved in *Uchaguzi*. There was some online advertising and there were digital media displays in malls and supermarkets.[41] There were advertisements in the *Daily Nation* newspaper (but not in *Citizen*, *People*, and *Star*).

Although *Uchaguzi* lacked a comprehensive media strategy, the fault did not only lie with the platform. The media may have also contributed to publicity problems.[42]

> Media houses? The media are special animals. The ones most interested in working with us wanted exclusivity, which is against our philosophy of transparency and information sharing.[43]

One strong relationship was with Radio Waumini's Jackline Opar in Nairobi, who gave *Uchaguzi* free airtime to discuss the platform during the Saturday show. Kaviwe Wambua, a member of the Secretariat, appeared on KBV television and radio, as well as Citizen TV to

[39] Respondent 1
[40] Respondent 4
[41] Respondents 7, 10, 11, 13
[42] Respondents 3, 9, 12
[43] Respondent 3

discuss the platform on both English and Kiswahili shows. Juliana Rotich also participated in television programs on NTV and KTN.[44] In addition, community radio such as Safari Radio and Ghetto Radio, as well as *Sauti ya Mwananchi*, *Amani* of Nakuru County, and Radio Namlolwe in Kisumu County, featured *Uchaguzi* during voter education programs. However, the information sharing was mainly done in a "one to many" manner, where citizens listened to a discussion about *Uchaguzi* on radio or TV. Social media including Facebook and Twitter were used to raise awareness of the platform and catalyze debate.[45] Interactive forums on radio or online were not fully utilized.

It appears that overall outreach to the media by *Uchaguzi* was sporadic and not well coordinated. In the heat of the election, however, the media did in fact start to rely on reports from *Uchaguzi*.

> One member of the Secretariat noted that the international media was in our situation room. The local media was a step behind.[46]

Specifically, some journalists wanted to get verification from ground volunteers on issues they heard before they decided to run a story. In addition, when tallying was occurring at Bomas of Kenya, people made calls to *Uchaguzi* to get information because the media were "largely in a position of self-censorship." Although there was no formal information sharing, as the election news dragged on while the vote was tallied, informal sharing occurred, as the media would email *Uchaguzi* with stories for verification. In addition, CNN and other international media houses followed *Uchaguzi* reports and used them as sources,[47] and KTN, the broadcast partner of the Kenyan *Standard* media house, showed *Uchaguzi's* maps.

### *Technical Aspects of Platform Operation*

A key founder, designer, and member of the original secretariat made an important point in our conversation with him. "Technology," he said, "is the easy part. Technology is only 10% of a successful deployment. The rest of it is people."[48] His words echo the words of a Kenyan technological expert who was not in the Secretariat, but was nonetheless closely involved in the *Uchaguzi* rollout.

[44] Respondent 5
[45] Respondent 5
[46] Respondent 3
[47] Respondents 5, 7, 13,10
[48] Respondent 3

> [*Uchaguzi*] over-concentrated on the technological issues, and disregarded the soft issues. Not enough emphasis was placed on the people side of things.[49]

There is no question that the platform was technically sound. According to the literature, by March 18, 2013, *Uchaguzi* generated 4,964 total and 2,699 verified reports (Felix, 2013, p. 25; Omenya & Crandall, 2013, p. 2). CRECO produced a report on where the observers were located, and who the observers reached. *Ushahidi* kept the final statistics of who ended up using the platform.

While the platform functioned properly, the aim of organizers was for the platform to be used by millions of citizens. This objective of scaling up the technology was not accomplished as originally intended. "The original intention of mass participation was not fulfilled, however, the concept that you can use technology to enable participation was proven."[50] One possible alternative explanation for the low number of reports to *Uchaguzi* that the research team considered was that people may have been scared of using the platform. Those interviewed felt that fear did not limit reports, because "what people could report was limited, and the platform is anonymous."[51] However, poor publicity efforts may have contributed to a lack of understanding of the user anonymity policy.

The main source of information for the platform was SMS via mobile phones, while Twitter and Facebook were rarely used to report incidents. People were more likely to use *Uchaguzi*'s Facebook and Twitter to talk about election problems. One respondent said there was "a need to popularize the hashtag #Uchaguzi."[52] In *Uchaguzi*, several assumptions were made about public use and about the use of the authorities. Indeed, there were eighteen different categories of issues that designers assumed that citizens could report on, including "marked ballot papers," and "tampering with election materials." However, according to our research, there was no effective way of communicating what these reporting categories were to citizens.

Furthermore, utilizing SMS puts the burden of text messaging cost on the potential user. Although the cost of text messaging varies depending what network is being used, and though

[49] Respondent 1
[50] Respondent 1
[51] Respondent 1
[52] Respondent 1

prices have dropped in the past two years, at the time of the 2013 elections on average, it cost approximately 3 KSH to send a text, particularly if you are sending to a phone on a different network (Safaricom website; Orange website; Zuku website). Since there is a cost to send texts to short code services, Kenyan citizens who wanted to send a text to *Uchaguzi* had to pay an 8 KSH cost per text. This is not an insignificant sum in a country which the World Bank ranks as low income, and where the per capita GNI was around 79,000 KSH ($930.00) in 2013.[53] As an insider at I-Hub with significant experience with both Ushahidi and Uchaguzi pointed out,

> The texts cost 8 shillings (worth of airtime, which is worth about two to four text messages. When I think about how to use 8 shillings, I could share a story with friends. It might make me look cool. I could tell some juicy gossip. Why should I use Uchaguzi? What is the value proposition?[54]

The technical team connected with field observers to verify citizen reports. The *Uchaguzi* organization deployed seven hundred actual observers—who were paid a stipend by CRECO--and two hundred supervisors. The goal was to have at least two observers per constituency. Reports sent by observers were considered "trusted."[55] Observers on the ground represented the key component of verifying reports. Expanding the network of reliable people on the ground was a crucial component of assuring verification. The reports by observers were not verified due to their trusted status.

Volunteers in the situation room would call the person who made the report to confirm, and also call others in the vicinity to confirm. Regina Opondo of CRECO was responsible for the team verifying the IEBC reports, Daudi Were was responsible for the team verifying security reports, and John Kipchumba was responsible for the team verifying National Security Council reports. In addition, CRECO also hosted election-monitoring teams from Tanzania, Zambia, Uganda and Zimbabwe who assisted with information coverage in the *Uchaguzi* Situation Room. The team had 230 digital humanitarians working in the situation room to process data.[56] Reports were then geocoded for another layer of credibility. One challenge was that each organization used a different method of generating reports on *Uchaguzi*, so that the style of reporting from different organizations to the platform was not necessarily consistent.

[53] World Bank poverty and equity data, http://povertydata.worldbank.org/poverty/country/KEN
[54] Respondent 2
[55] Respondents 3, 11
[56] Respondents 3, 11

*Confusion over Use of the Short Code*

Numerous respondents mentioned the short code as an issue of note in *Uchaguzi's* publicity strategy.[57] The actual *Uchaguzi* short code itself was only publicized five days before the 2010 referendum and two weeks before the 2013 election. One respondent was confident that there was no confusion on the short code, and the short code was shared among partners.[58] Nonetheless, several respondents did feel there was significant confusion among the public due to the numerous short codes in existence.[59] They expressed concerns that the public did not know which short codes to use.[60] In 2013, there were at least seven different short codes, including codes distributed by Amani Kibera, the NCCK, and ELOG. In addition to these organizations, there was an organization called *Uwiano*, which was a marriage between government and civil society, but eventually, became a government platform. They had a short code that was well publicized.[61] Because of the multiple short codes in existence, efforts were duplicated unnecessarily.[62]

The numerous and competing codes created two problems: First, it was difficult for citizens to decide where to report a problem, and second, there was no way to aggregate data across platforms. The NCCI was interested in aggregating the data, but that goal was never actualized. One organization did share data—*Turuke* was a faith-based short code that shared data with *Uchaguzi*. More than one respondent noted that this model showed that it would have been more effective for numerous organizations to share one short code, while also sharing data.

[57] A short code is a special mobile telephone number that is significantly shorter than a regular phone number. Short codes are used because they are generally easier to remember and can be billed at rates different from the standard SMS rate. Because SODNET stopped supporting the short code for Voice of Kibera and the declining costs for sending text messages, the project no longer uses the short code. Text messages are sent to a regular phone number at standard SMS rates (Tully, 2011: 152)."

[58] Respondent 7

[59] Multiple short codes can be confusing for the public. For example, during the 2010 Kenyan Constitutional Referendum, short codes were released to the public from Uchaguzi/CRECO (3018) as well as Uwiano (6397). The public was not sure where to send reports.

[60] Multiple short codes can be confusing for the public. For example, during the 2010 Kenyan Constitutional Referendum, short codes were released to the public from Uchaguzi/CRECO (3018) as well as Uwiano (6397). The public was not sure where to send reports.

[61] Respondents 3, 11, 13

[62] Respondents 3,6,9,14

> Our aim was one platform, one shortcode. [Our goal was that] all data be processed in the same place. . . . But people really broke into their silos.[63]

That being said, the seven short codes in 2013 represented an improvement over the previous election. In 2007-2008, a PDF was distributed to the public with a list of two hundred landlines. Compared to this long list, the seven short codes seen in 2013 represent a marked consolidation.[64] Simply having one platform and one short code may never become a reality. One key insider noted, "Even in the best of circumstances, there will always be at least two platforms—one government and one civil society."[65]

### Innovative and Unexpected Uses of the Platform

According to our interviews, implementers were surprised by some of the unexpected, innovative ways in which the platform was used. For example, some users asked for directions of where to go and vote. In addition, one person reported a fire via *Uchaguzi* in order to get quick action even though the fire was not election-related and not near any poll station. Other non-election related matters were reported to the platform, such as acts of violence (unrelated to the election) in Dandora and Mathare, and ambulances were called. In addition, on election-day during "a self-imposed media blackout," four deaths were reported through *Uchaguzi*.[66] In this case, the villagers used *Uchaguzi* to tell the police that the attackers were not from the village, and Uchaguzi then reported the incidents. As one interviewee noted, "We told the NSC. There were no revenge attacks by the police. People in the village were grateful." The villagers' ability to reach the police through *Uchaguzi* increased the platform's credibility as an alternative communication mechanism. The fact that ambulances came quickly after the Dandora and Mathare attacks may have been a coincidence; however, according to our interviews, word spread that *Uchaguzi* was "effective."[67]

## Partnerships and Collaborative Relationships

Previous research has suggested that, in addition to the use of technology, *Uchaguzi* incorporated partnerships with NGOs as part of a larger strategy (Fung, Russon Gilman, & Shkabatur, 2013a,

[63] Respondents 3, 11
[64] Respondent 3
[65] Respondent 3
[66] Respondent 3
[67] Respondent 7

p. 27). It also cooperated with the Interim Independent Electoral Commission (IIEC), and the IIEC became the main users of the aggregated data. This new model was designed to help the organization hold their partners – in particular, government entities – accountable to address election-related violence.

However, our fieldwork supports the proposition that coordinating and managing partner commitments was a challenge during both the 2010 Referendum and the 2013 Kenyan elections. One respondent provided an insightful summary. "The challenges were as follows, 1) silos, 2) unwillingness to share data 3) competition for financial flows, and 4) trust issues."[68] Another noted, "partnerships are difficult to manage. Candidly, the high visibility of *Uchaguzi* created friction amongst partners."[69]

All respondents agreed that the management of the partnership did not go as well as imagined. There were significant internal communications problems. In particular, several respondents were concerned that terms of reference between partner organizations were not clearly defined, and expectations were not clearly laid out. In addition, evidence of role confusion was present. Hivos was a donor and a funder, but was also receiving funds from other donors. In addition, Hivos was a fund manager, but was also supposed to supervise reporting and broker relationships between different partners, which one interviewee indicated as a problematic posture.[70] In addition, SODNET were partners but also grantees. These divided roles created confusion regarding who reported to whom, and who was responsible for final outcomes.

Our research uncovered differences of opinion with regard to the nature of partnerships. One of the key coalition members, CRECO, had a long-standing partnership with the IEBC, with ELOG, and with the Kenyan Human Rights Commission ("KHRC") as governance and human rights observers. According to several of our respondents, that relationship was continued and strengthened from 2010 through the 2013 elections. Indeed, *Uchaguzi* approached the interim commissioner of the IIEC in October of 2010 and made presentations.

Yet some of our respondents felt that these meetings were held too close to the time of the referendum. According to one respondent, "They did not adequately explain how the platform

[68] Respondent 3
[69] Respondent 7
[70] Respondents 1, 3, 6, 9, 11

would or could be used by the commission." Further, although partnerships existed, relationships with partners seem to have been sporadic. Other respondents emphasized the numerous meetings they had, as many as fifty meetings with CSOs between January and March of 2013 alone. According to some of our respondents, they were usually "one-off" familiarization meetings.

The short time frame available for mobilizing the *Uchaguzi* network created challenges in outreach to partners, and made it difficult to establish smooth working relationships. More than one respondent was concerned that the "rush" made them overlook issues and miss partnership opportunities that could have been developed. In addition, as noted in the literature, there were not clear MOUs among partners and coalition members regarding the terms of their engagement. More than one respondent suggested that they needed a credible and neutral entity such as UNDP with "some gravitas" to manage partnerships.[71] Problems with trust were a recurring theme in interviews. The traditional election monitoring organizations were concerned that monitors would do the work while *Uchaguzi* would get the credit.

### *Partners and Training*

Existing research indicates that *Ushahidi* and CRECO trained at least five hundred election monitors on how to use the *Uchaguzi* platform via SMS (Avila, Feigenblatt, Heacock, & Heller, 2010, p. 15; Chan, 2012, p. 6). Our research supports these assertions. Announcements were made in I-Hub and several trainings of volunteers and NGOs were conducted at I-Hub.[72] In addition, they held ten digital humanitarian trainings, which required that participants have access to a computer and the internet and be able to use Skype and the *Uchaguzi* platform. These trainings generally attracted more educated and higher income individuals due to the requirements of access to a computer and have a fairly high level of sophistication in using applications.

The main training sessions were largely conducted at *Ushahidi* headquarters in Nairobi and took two days. In addition, CRECO conducted nine trainings around the country. As part of this process, CRECO gave members material, trained observer supervisors, and developed a manual on how best to inform people about *Uchaguzi* that observers carried with them.[73] This

[71] Respondents 3, 6
[72] Respondent 5
[73] Respondents 3 and 4

organization had a target of training 1,500 volunteer observers. They did not reach the target, but did manage to successfully train seven hundred volunteer observers, most of whom came from member organizations.

Our respondents did voice two concerns. First, it appears that most of those trained were located in Nairobi and trained by people living in Nairobi. Second, the training was rushed, and it was difficult to measure the effectiveness or quality of the training other volunteers received from their supervisors.[74]

One of the traditional election observers working in the coalition suggested that *Uchaguzi* needs to improve their partnerships with political parties. Agents of political parties who were observing the vote count at the constituency level could have used the platform to share information observed at the poll stations.

### *Relationships with Government Organizations*

The platform's designers developed relationships with various government organizations. For example, *Uchaguzi* worked with the national steering committee for peace and conflict building, located inside the Ministry of Internal Security in the Office of the President. Visits were also made to the IEBC, the NCIC, and various police stations.[75]

The designers of *Uchaguzi* also assumed that security agencies could use it to arrest persons guilty of electoral malpractices and prevent violence. According to one of our respondents, "the assumption that the police would view the platform was a little far-fetched."[76] For police to be aware of the problem, someone would have to view the platform, extract the information, and then go tell the police. Although there was a situation room in Nairobi, in other areas of the country, someone had to get access to the platform and then tell local officials.

> There was an assumption that police would just be sitting around viewing the platform. There was a training issue, a publicity issue, and an access issue for police.[77]

[74] Respondents 3, 4, 12, 13
[75] Respondent 3
[76] Respondent 1
[77] Respondent 1

In addition, there was consensus that communication with security agencies was late, and not intensive enough. Three days before elections, *Uchaguzi* informed police about the platform, but only Nairobi police were informed.[78] Various background sources point to issues with coordination between Uchaguzi and governmental authorities. For example, Daudi Were of *Ushahidi* mentioned that government authorities were eager to receive information from *Uchaguzi* but were not so eager to share how they responded to reports. Law enforcement agencies, as well as the two (dedicated) IEBC commissioners, would only say "appropriate action has been taken." When asked about the details, however, they would offer few, if any, specifics (Leson, 2013).

One informant reflected on the efforts to develop relationships with the Government of Kenya (GoK).

> Forming relationships with the [GoK] is like dating them. We took the IEBC staff to Zambia to show them the work we were doing there. We were trying to establish credibility. We took them to coffee. We took them to lunch. One year before the election, we were very popular. By February [The election was on March 4, 2013], no one was answering our calls. Then, two months after the election, everyone wanted our data.

Accordingly, our research strengthens the idea that the GoK was eager to take information from the platform but reluctant to share its own information with the platform or with civil society in general. The weak coordination between *Uchaguzi* and the government can also be seen as a side-effect of the strained relationships between Kenyan civil society and the state.

## Relationships with Donors

### *Donors and Funding*

A small number of respondents believed that funding was adequate. Based on our interviews the funding for *Uchaguzi* was 638,750 Euros for five countries- Zambia, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania- which worked out to an average of 127,750 Euros per country. One could argue that this funding allowed the Kenyan *Uchaguzi* team to spend 36.3 Euros per message.[79] In

[78] Respondents 1, 3, 4, 6
[79] Respondent 3

addition, Hivos received $150,000 that was specifically used for t-shirts, posters, caps and food.[80]

Other respondents believed that the level of funding did not reasonably reflect the value of the work provided.

> The money we got, we used to feed our volunteers… as well as for food, posters, airtime for the verification team and for trainings outside Nairobi. Was it sufficient? No, if you value the actual work we provided, it was worth around $700,000 to $800,000.[81]

Others believed that publicity, advertising, and PR could have been improved by, for example, purchasing billboards, had more funding been available.[82] "A lot of work was undertaken on a voluntary basis due to budget constraints."[83] Some specific suggestions for future cost allocation included media outreach, establishing a permanent short code, establishing long-term observation, and conducting at least two press conferences. Several respondents were concerned that whatever money was available was not deployed correctly, and felt that more funds should have been used for communications and outreach and less for salaries and partner meetings.

There were thirty different civil society initiatives in the 2013 election, funded by five main donors including DFID (UK) USAID (US), SIDA (Sweden), CIDA (Canada), Hivos (Netherlands).[84] Indeed, different donors funded competing platforms.

> Election monitoring is a political minefield. There is a lot of money, and a lot of competition as to who gets the money. We may have underestimated [how fierce the competition would be].[85]

Just having one short code costs approximately $3000 USD per month. Sharing the short code and data would enhance the reliability and comprehensiveness of data collected by an entity such

[80] Respondent 3
[81] Respondent 3
[82] Respondents 3, 4, 5, 6
[83] Respondent 5
[84] Respondent 3
[85] Respondent 6

as *Uchaguzi*. However, it would also require NGOs to prioritize efficiency and collaboration in data processing and gathering above their own financial self-interest.

> Many organizations can fund three years [of] work from one year of funding, so there is no incentive to collaborate and cooperate. The data these groups collect is precious. It is what they use to get funding. Sharing threatens their existence. So, we understand why CSOs and CBOs won't collaborate. But it is harder to explain why the donors funded so many different projects.[86]

This response points to a key issue that may have weakened the success of *Uchaguzi*. Numerous respondents reported disappointment at the commercial inclinations of various civil society organizations. Respondents also reported a sense that CSOs did not have an attitude focused on partnering towards shared goals. Since NGOs were competing with each other for donor funds, their competitive posture actually created a perverse incentive against collaboration. Indeed, not only was there little incentive to collaborate and cooperate, there was clear financial incentive not to cooperate. Accordingly, in future elections, donors should consider finding ways to improve coordination on issues such as data gathering, which are of interest to all.

### *Citizens and End Users*

When asked about the identity of *Uchaguzi*'s end users, our team received a variety of responses ranging from "Kenyan citizens," to "the middle class as well as the youth who are tech savvy." Another respondent believed that citizens represented the majority of users, followed by observers.[87] One respondent asked, "Who were the citizens? An important assumption was that citizens would view this as a tool they had been waiting for."[88] A key founder, designer, and member of the Secretariat noted that

> We really focused on the average citizen. The idea of *Uchaguzi* is that we would accept data from anywhere, from anyone, on any issue related to the election. We were really looking for ordinary citizens who felt

[86] Respondent 3
[87] Respondents 4, 5, 8, 10
[88] Respondent 1

> excluded from the election: people who felt they did not have a way to get their voices heard.

Initially, according to the respondents, the project targeted any adult, particularly members of the voting public, with a phone access to a phone. Furthermore, the project targeted citizens who "[had] been dissatisfied on how elections had been handled and required channels to amplify complaints, concerns, or even simply opinions on the elections."[89] The project founders also envisioned that official observers would use the platform to make reports that would then go to the IEBC, the police, and other security agencies.

One respondent noted, "Who were the citizens? An important assumption was that citizens would view this as a tool they had been waiting for."[90] Based on our interviews, two points are relevant here. First, *Uchaguzi* did not specifically do outreach to individuals they thought might use the platform. Rather, they relied on the NGOs in the coalition to do that outreach. Even inside the coalition, outreach to coalition members was not targeted. Rather, it was simply assumed that coalition members would make the right kind of citizens aware of the platform.

There was no specific plan developed to determine who the end users should be, and how to reach out to them. Second, as noted above, outreach to media was not systematically planned, and occurred in a somewhat ad hoc manner. This lack of a media plan also represented a lost opportunity to target end users. Indeed, it may make sense in the next iteration of *Uchaguzi* to think about what end users the platform wishes to target, and where those users live, and then develop a media strategy around targeting those people.

As one member of the Secretariat mentioned,

> That is one of the biggest challenges: "Know your user." It is very important, but very hard. If someone sent us an SMS anonymously, we cannot send them a questionnaire asking demographic questions.[91]

[89] Respondent 7
[90] Respondent 1
[91] Respondent 3

It wound up being very difficult to determine who actually used the platform. Given this gap in understanding, our research team designed a survey to target a small sample of geographically diverse Kenyan citizens in an effort to gather more information on the end user.

## UNDERSTANDING THE END USER: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

As part of this study, in order to engage in the first stages of a process to assess the demand-side of the *Uchaguzi* equation, our team conducted a survey of nearly five hundred Kenyan citizens. The main purpose of the survey was to get an assessment of Kenyan citizens' familiarity with the platform.

The team conducted the surveys in more than thirty towns, and across fourteen counties. The team randomly approached people exiting cyber cafes, offices, schools, markets, sporting areas, streets, and homes and asked a variety of questions, including if they had heard of *Uchaguzi* (See Appendix 5: Survey Guide). Our team was able to survey a total of 446 people and covered most regions in Kenya, including Nairobi, Central, Northeastern, the Coast, the Rift Valley, Western, the Lake Victoria region, and the Machakos area.

When asked if they had ever heard of *Uchaguzi*, 63% of those surveyed answered no, while the remaining 37% answered yes.

**Table 1: Have respondents ever heard about Uchaguzi?**

| Heard about Uchaguzi | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Yes | 37% |
| No | 63% |

**Source: Surveys conducted by authors**

Of the respondents who said that they had heard about Uchaguzi, 30%, said that they heard about it on the internet; 29% heard about it on television; 21% heard about it from friends and/or family; and 16%, heard about it from newspapers. Of the respondents who heard about the platform from a newspaper, 75% of them said that the newspaper was The Daily Nation.

**Table 2: How did respondents hear about Uchaguzi?**

| Methods of hearing about Uchaguzi | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Internet | 30% |
| Television | 29% |
| Family/Friends | 21% |
| Newspapers | 16% |

**Source: Surveys conducted by authors**

Of the respondents surveyed who had heard about *Uchaguzi*, 34% said that they used it and 66% said that they did not use it.

**Table 3: Had the respondent used Uchaguzi?**

| Used Uchaguzi | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Yes | 34% |
| No | 66% |

**Source: Surveys conducted by authors**

Of the respondents who *had* heard about *Uchaguzi*, 81% said that they knew someone else who used it. Of those who knew someone else who had used it, 47% said that members of their family used it, and another 45% said that friends used it.

**Table 4: Did respondents know anyone else who used *Uchaguzi?***

| Knew someone else who used it | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Family | 47% |
| Friends | 45% |
| Others | 8% |

**Source: Surveys conducted by authors**

Of the respondents who themselves actually used the platform, 60% said that they used it through a computer, while 40% of users said that they used it through their cellphone. When the surveyed voters who had used the platform were asked about the ways in which they used the platform, 45% of the users said that they used it to inform others in the community, 27% of

*Uchaguzi* users said that they used it to report electoral malpractices, and 27% of users said that they used it to report about safety conditions at polling stations.

**Table 5: How did respondents use *Uchaguzi?***

| **How respondents used *Uchaguzi*** | **Percentage** |
|---|---|
| Inform others in the community | 45% |
| Report electoral malpractices | 27% |
| Report safety conditions at polling stations | 27% |
| Others | 1% |

**Source: Surveys conducted by authors**

When asked about why they decided to use *Uchaguzi* instead of other platforms during the elections, 46% of users said that they chose it because they found it easy to use, 15% said that they found it very efficient, and 10% said that they chose it because they received instant feedback.

**Table 6: Why did respondents choose to use Uchaguzi instead of other platforms?**

| **Reasons why Uchaguzi was used instead of other platforms** | **Percentage** |
|---|---|
| Easy to use | 46% |
| Very efficient | 15% |
| Instant feedback | 10% |
| Other | 29% |

**Source: Survey conducted by authors**

Of the respondents who themselves used *Uchaguzi*, 60% said that they used it to report an incident, while 40% of users did not report an incident. Of the respondents who reported an incident using *Uchaguzi,* nearly three quarters said that the incident reported was resolved. Fifty-five percent of the respondents who used *Uchaguzi* said that they were able to visualize the *Uchaguzi* map. However, 32% respondents who used Uchaguzi said that they had a desire to see the map, which suggests that they did not completely understand the functionality of the site or never used the site, even if they used the system.

When asked to describe any benefit of using *Uchaguzi* in relation to their role in the community, 33% respondents said that it has the benefit of being reliable and/or dependable, 17% said that it is time saving, 17% said that it has the benefit of being informative, and 15% said that it has the benefit of being easy to use.

**Table 7: What benefits did Uchaguzi bring to respondents in relation to their role in the community?**

| Benefits to respondents | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Reliable/dependable | 33% |
| Time saving | 17% |
| Informative | 17% |
| Easy to use | 15% |
| Others | 18% |

**Source: Surveys conducted by authors**

Finally, when asked what aspects of *Uchugazi* they would change, 62% of respondents said that they would make it more accessible to the illiterate and 36% said that they would create more awareness around it and/or would advertise it. These survey results support the results we found in our interviews with founders, funders, and designers, who also emphasized the importance of increasing public awareness. In addition, our interviewees often suggested making the Uchaguzi platform more intuitive. Accordingly, these two data collection methods support each other on these results.

**Table 8: What would respondents change to improve Uchaguzi?**

| How to improve Uchaguzi | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Make it accessible also to the illiterate | 62% |
| Create more awareness | 36% |
| Others | 2% |

**Source: Surveys conducted by authors**

To conclude, we asked the respondents who *have not heard* of *Uchaguzi* if they had ever heard of *Ushahidi*: 82% (334) of the respondents said that they had not, while 18% (71) of the respondents said that they had heard of *Ushahidi*.

**Table 9: Had the respondents who were unfamiliar with *Uchaguzi* ever heard of *Ushahidi?***

| Heard of Ushahidi | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Yes | 18% |
| No | 82% |

**Source: Surveys conducted by authors**

As the *Ushahidi* platform had been in place for longer than *Uchaguzi*, we asked this question in an attempt to evaluate whether there was an improvement in familiarity over the lifetime of the platform. A significant number of people who were unfamiliar with *Uchaguzi* were familiar with *Ushahidi*. This suggests that more time and more publicity will increase public familiarity with the *Uchaguzi* platform, an idea that was raised in our qualitative interviews as well.

## EXPECTATIONS AND FUTURE PLANS

Returning to the expert interviews, most of the expert interview respondents felt that their expectations for the service were met. As one founder noted, "it created a possibility for engaging citizens in elections." [92] Kenya was relatively peaceful during the 2013 elections, and *Uchaguzi* may have played a role in that.[93] In reflecting on what was achieved, and what could be achieved, one founder offered the following thoughts,

> A perfect *Uchaguzi* system would be where CSO's make use of the platform. It should have well worked out relationships with security, clear guidelines, and a couple of clever media people. In reality, that is very hard to achieve.[94]

Respondents offered thoughtful suggestions for improvement. Numerous respondents stressed the need for the platform to be used more frequently, in more elections, not just general elections. As one respondent suggested, "*Uchaguzi* should be an everyday occurrence and in every election including the by-elections. *Uchaguzi* can [put] checks and balances for both the media, and the government, in particular the IEBC."[95] Furthermore, those interviewed indicated that it would be desirable for the IEBC to act on complaints and suggestions made on the platform in future elections, although that is a decision that IEBC needs to make, and that

[92] Respondent 9
[93] Respondent 3
[94] Respondent 6
[95] Respondent 5

*Uchaguzi* cannot force them to make.[96] Other respondents suggested that *Uchaguzi* may be able to set up an election monitoring toolkit for other countries, helping them learn how to do outreach, how to build partnerships, and how to make a platform sustainable and affordable.[97] Importantly, one founder stressed the need to strengthen relationships with civil society election observation organizations.[98] This might involve having a forum with observation groups, monitoring observation groups, and making changes to technology based on their suggestions. In addition, respondents noted that electoral management bodies need to have a more direct connection to the platform.

## CONCLUSION

*It is easy to raze, but hard to build*
(proverb, first recorded in the year 1577 A.D.)

There are a number of findings in this paper that provide insight into the ways in which *Uchaguzi* was designed, implemented and received, some areas for improvement, and implications for the wider field of ICT use in governance processes. One of the most important findings of this paper is that the *Uchaguzi* platform's technological approach was sound and served as an important, innovative development in the field of electoral observation and monitoring. The underlying intentions and designs of the platform hold great promise for future technological and policy interventions in electoral monitoring.

To answer our initial research questions, this study has found that *Uchaguzi* represents a blended model incorporating both crowd-seeding (placing monitors on the ground to collect data) and crowd-sourcing (collecting information from the public). The success of crowd-seeding is a function of *Uchaguzi's* partnerships with local and international agencies. Overall, the blended model is quite remarkable in that it theoretically provides a robust monitoring mechanism incorporating feedback from both experts and ordinary citizens. Future projects in Kenya and other locations across the world should consider such a model.

[96] Respondent 7
[97] Respondent 3
[98] Respondent 14

Given the short time available to design and launch the platform, and given the novelty of the model's approach, our respondents felt that the project was a success. Even accounting for the difficulties experienced in the heat of the 2013 election, our research showed that designers and participants in and around the *Uchaguzi* platform held fast to their vision:

> Uchaguzi can do more than just collect information. It can push for policy changes and allow citizen participation in governance processes. The partnerships were a continuous effort, and given the many hiccups, we still worked well, although we were not able to merge the various platforms… Greater cooperation among stakeholders is necessary to make Uchaguzi more effective in the future.[99]

Perhaps the assessment of *Uchaguzi's* impact should be not relegated to one election cycle but to a series of elections over time. For example, our research shows that publicity for the 2013 election was more thorough than for the 2010 referendum. The machinery that is being built provides an avenue for citizens to team up with election monitors and NGOs to combat electoral malpractices. The nascent partnership formed between *Uchaguzi*, civil society, the state, and local and international organizations can serve as a beginning template for further cross-sector collaborations in election monitoring and other governance challenges.

As with all new endeavors, there are areas that require improvement. In many ways, the practical and theoretical challenges (i.e., technical, partnerships, outreach, and efficacy to impact transparency/accountability) outlined in the literature review were consistent with our research findings.

*Uchaguzi's* ability to facilitate a response to reports of violence is compromised by a lack of engagement with police and security agencies. In addition, *Uchaguzi's* relationship with the media establishment was not coordinated or carefully planned, and hampered the potential use of the platform for information-sharing to the public. A lack of internet access in rural areas, and Nairobi-focused outreach in particular, impeded the *Uchaguzi*-public interface from reaching beyond specific parts of the country (Nairobi). Further, competing efforts among NGOs in election monitoring hampered organizational cooperation and resulted in the proliferation of

[99] Respondent 4

short codes, confusing the public. Overall, flows of information to intended partners and the public were not fully realized. Based on this most recent election, the role *Uchaguzi* and platforms like it will most likely affect transparency and accountability in incremental yet positive ways, including the potential to put increasing pressure on state institutions to hold more credible elections.

Despite these challenges, many have suggested that the platform has the potential to expand beyond monitoring the general election to monitoring by-elections. Some envisioned a greatly expanded purview for the platform, including security, governance, and other matters such as county development and the constitution implementation process. Awareness creation and significantly strengthened media relationships are important for the future of *Uchaguzi*, and can be incorporated into other processes of voter education.

Our research suggests that as *Uchaguzi* continues to grow, it should be utilized more frequently, throughout the entire election cycle, aiming to become a ubiquitous electoral monitoring technology. This would have two implications. First, continued advertising of the platform over an extended time frame and across multiple electoral events would create a rich database of electoral behavior that scholars and donors can use to evaluate elections in a time series fashion. In addition, repeated use of *Uchaguzi* would slowly create publicity and credibility for the platform, allowing the coalition to saturate the country with its message and ensure quality engagement. Finally, having *Uchaguzi* monitor the entire electoral cycle would give the platform operators the opportunity to reach out to parts of the country that were not fully covered in the general election.

# REFERENCES

Akpedonu, T., Lumsdaine, B., & Sow, A. (2013). *Keeping the peace: Lessons learned from preventive action towards Kenya's 2013 elections*. Geneva: Geneva Peacebuilding Platform.

Avila, R., Feigenblatt, H., Heacock, R., & Heller, N. (2010). *Global mapping of technology for transparency and accountability: New technologies*. London: Open Society Foundation.

Bailard, C., Baker, R., Hindman, M., Livingston, S, & Meier, P. (2012). *Mapping the Maps: A meta-level analysis of Ushahidi and Crowdmap*. Internews Center for Innovation & Learning: Washington, DC.

Bailard, C. S. (2012). A Field Experiment on the Internet's Effect in an African Election: Savvier Citizens, Disaffected Voters, or Both? *Journal of Communication, 62*(2), 330-344.

Best, Michael L. (2013). Peacebuilding in a networked world. *Communications of the ACM, 56*(4), 30-32.

Bimber, B. A. (2003). *Information and American democracy: Technology in the evolution of political power*: Cambridge University Press.

Bowman, W., & Camp, L .J. (2013). Protecting the Internet from Dictators Technical and Policy Solutions to Ensure Online Freedoms. *Innovation Journal, 18*(1).

Chan, J. (2012). *Uchaguzi: A Case Study. Successes, Challenges and New Ways Forward*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Humanitarian Initiative & Knight Foundation.

Chisango, T., & Gwandure, C. (2011). Delegitimisation of Disliked Political Organisations Through Biased Language and Acronyming. *Journal of Psychology in Africa, 21*(3).

Craig, J. (2013). Crowd Sourcing Project Aims to Keep Kenyan Polls Credible. *Voice of America Press Releases and Documents*.

Dale, A., & Strauss, A. (2009). Don't forget to vote: Text message reminders as a mobilization tool. *American Journal of Political Science, 53*(4), 787-804.

Deibert, R. J., & Rohozinski, R. (2010). Risking security: policies and paradoxes of cyberspace security. *International Political Sociology, 4*(1), 15-32.

Feezell, J. T., Conroy, M., & Guerrero, M. (2009). *Facebook is... fostering political engagement: A study of online social networking groups and offline participation.* Paper presented at the APSA 2009 Toronto Meeting Paper http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm.

Felix, M. (2013). *Making fear switch sides? Accountability for human rights in the context of Kenyan Elections*. Department of Human Rights Studies, Lund University.

Ford, H. (2012). Crowd Wisdom. *Index on Censorship, 41*(4), 33-39.

Fraga, D. A. (2007). Information Technology, Regime Stability and Democratic Meaningfulness: A Normative Evaluation of Present and Potential Trends. *CUREJ: College Undergraduate Research Electronic Journal.*

Erickson F., "Qualitative Methods in Research on Teaching," in *Handbook of Research on Teaching,* 3rd ed., M. Wittrock, Ed. (New York: MacMillan, 1986), 140.

Fung, A., Russon Gilman, H., & Shkabatur, J. (2013). *Impact case studies from middle income and developing countries: New technologies*. London: Open Society Foundation.

Fung, A., Russon Gilman, H., & Shkabatur, J. (2013). Six Models for the Internet + Politics. *International Studies Review, 15*(1), 30-47.

Garber, L., Dallas, E., & Wilkie, J. (2014). Usaid support for Kenya's 2013 elections: Rapid assessment review. Washington, DC: USAID.

Georgiadou, Y., Lungo, J. H., & Richter, C. (2013). Citizen sensors or extreme publics? Transparency and accountability interventions on the mobile geoweb. *International Journal of Digital Earth*, 1-18.

Hyman, P. (2014). 'Peace technologies' enable eyewitness reporting when disasters strike. *Communications of the ACM, 57*(1), 27-29. doi: 10.1145/2555808

Kelly Garrett, R. (2006). Protest in an information society: A review of literature on social movements and new ICTs. *Information, communication & society, 9*(02), 202-224.

Krueger, B. S. (2006). A comparison of conventional and internet political mobilization. *American Politics Research, 34*(6), 759-776.

Land, M., Meier, P., Belinsky, M., & Jacobi, E. (2012). *#ICT4HR: Information and Communication Technologies for Human Rights*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Leson, H. (2013, July 15). *Uchaguzi M&E Research Chat* [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-fN8Xkfj6H4.

Ligaga, D. (2012). "Virtual expressions": Alternative online spaces and the staging of Kenyan popular cultures. *Research in African Literatures, 43*(4), 1-16.

Malhotra, N., Michelson, M. R., Rogers, T., & Valenzuela, A. A. (2011). Text messages as mobilization tools: The conditional effect of habitual voting and election salience. *American Politics Research, 39*(4), 664-681.

Marsden, J. (2013). Stigmergic self-organization and the improvisation of Ushahidi. *Cognitive Systems Research, 21*(0), 52-64.

Mbuvi, D. (2013, 13 June). Low income communities in Kenya exhibiting online self-censorship, *CIO East Africa*.

Networked News Lab (2013). *Kenya's tech community will not save journalism*. Nairobi: Networked News Lab.

Omenya, R. (2013). *Uchaguzi Kenya 2013: Monitoring & evaluation*. Nairobi: iHub Research.

Omenya, R., & Crandall, A. (2013). *Uchaguzi monitoring and evaluation research summary report March 18, 2013*. Nairobi: iHub Research.

Palmer, L. (2014). Ushahidi at the Google interface: Critiquing the 'geospatial visualization of testimony'. *Continuum*, 1-15.

Pflanz, M. (2013). "In Kenya, Social Media Hate Speech Rises as Nation Awaits Election Ruling." *Yahoo! News*. March 21. Retrieved from: http://news.yahoo.com/kenya-social-media-hate-speech-rises-nation-awaits-180439909.html.

Ring, C. E. (2013). *Hate speech in social media: An exploration of the problem and its proposed solutions.* University of Colorado at Boulder.

Rodan, G. (1998). The internet and political control in Singapore. *Political Science Quarterly, 113*(1), 63-89.

Sharan M., *Case study research in education: A qualitative approach*. (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1988).

Shirky, C. (2011). The political power of social media: Technology, the public sphere, and political change. *Foreign Affairs, 90*, 28.

Tolbert, C. J., & McNeal, R. S. (2003). Unraveling the effects of the Internet on political participation? *Political Research Quarterly, 56*(2), 175-185.

Tufekci, Z., & Wilson, C. (2012). "Social media and the decision to participate in political protest: Observations from Tahrir Square." *Journal of Communication, 62*(2), 363-379.

Tully, M. (2011) "From Expectations to Implementation: An Analysis of Ushahidi and ICT Projects," Dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Weber, L. M., Loumakis, A., & Bergman, J. (2003). Who participates and why? An analysis of citizens on the Internet and the mass public. *Social Science Computer Review, 21*(1), 26-42.

Xenos, M., & Moy, P. (2007). Direct and differential effects of the Internet on political and civic engagement. *Journal of Communication, 57*(4), 704-718.