This report reviews government and non-government ICT initiatives in Uganda, and examines how ICT-related policies and other legislation affect citizen participation and democratic governance. Among others, the study covers the link between ICT and political participation, social accountability, public services delivery and citizen engagement.

The report is based on policy analysis, stakeholder interviews and literature review, and aims to inform awareness raising initiatives and advocacy for more progressive policies and practices regarding the use of ICT in governance and civic participation in Uganda.

Contents

1. Introduction

Uganda's population is estimated at 37 million, with a life expectancy of 59 years, and GDP per capita of US$ 580. About one-fifth of the population lives below the poverty line, while the literacy rate stands at 73%.[1] After numerous coups, civil wars and bans on multiparty politics, in 2005 President Yoweri Museveni's government allowed the reintroduction of multiparty politics, which it had banned in 1986 on the grounds that it bred sectarianism and instability. As of September 2015, Uganda had 29 registered political parties.[2] The National Resistance Movement (NRM) has been in power since 1986, and although Uganda holds regular elections, the opposition and some independent observers routinely claim the polls are marred by voter intimidation and other irregularities.

A number of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) initiatives and platforms have been put in place to enhance democratic governance in Uganda. Additionally, supportive legal and regulatory frameworks have also been adopted. These range from those promoting citizen engagements, political participation to service delivery monitoring.

1.1 Access to ICT

Access to ICT has grown steadily over the last decade, as shown in Figure 1 below. In 2004, less than 5% of the population had access to a telephone, but a decade later access had passed the 50% mark. As of June 2014, Uganda had a tele-density of 53 phone lines per 100 inhabitants, translating into 19.5 million connections. The number of internet users was 8.5 million (23% of the population).[3] As of June 2015, the national communications regulator had licensed 25 Public Infrastructure Providers (PIP) and 36 Public Service Providers (PSP) for voice and data.[4]
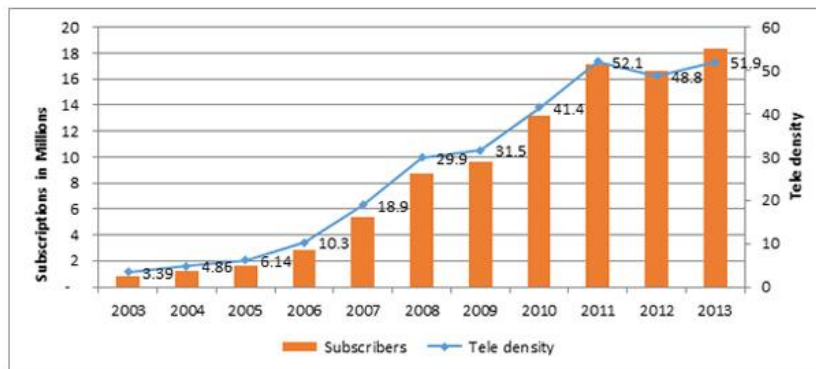

Figure 1: Subscriber and Teledensity Data 2003 – 2013 (Source: UCC)

Improvement of rural access is being realised through the Rural Communications Development Fund (RCDF) that is funded by a 2% levy on licensed telecommunications operators' revenue. Through the installation and integration of ICT in health, education, postal services and local governments, as well as ICT skills training drives, among others, RCDF has made significant strides in addressing the digital divide in the country.

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[1] Uganda Bureau of Statistics, Statistical Abstract 2013,
http://www.ubos.org/onlinefiles/uploads/ubos/pdf%20documents/abstracts/Statistical%20Abstract%2020
13.pdf
[2] Electoral Commission, Registered Political Parties, http://www.ec.or.ug/regdparty.php
[3] UCC, Telecom subscribers & Penetration Data, June 2014, http://ucc.co.ug/data/qmenu/3/Facts-and-Figures.html
[4] UCC List of Licensees, http://ucc.co.ug/data/smenu/80/List-of-Licensees.html

Projects set up through the Fund include:[5]
- Over 1,090 school ICT laboratories;
- ICT facilities at 210 health centres;
- 110 District web portals;
- Installation of ICT laboratories in all army institutions;
- Piloting of one ICT laboratory project for private schools in at least one school per district.

Despite the impressive statistics, the RCDF has been criticised for its failure to assess the impact of its investments in the communities it serves. During the assessment of the first phase of RCDF, it was observed that only 923 out of 3,863 implemented projects were still functional.[6] Some stakeholders contend that there are discrepancies in the criteria used to offer support, with "low economic return" initiatives such as those run by women's groups often left out, while commercially-oriented projects receive more attention.[7]

Meanwhile, in the health and education sectors, challenges highlighted include the inadequacy of ICT teachers and instructors, insufficient user training, lack of maintenance budgets, use of RCDF-financed equipment for unintended purposes, partial delivery of promised packages, and a high student-to-computer ratio.[8] The lack of supporting infrastructure such as electricity has also been mentioned as a challenge to the success of some RCDF projects.[9]

The liberalisation of the broadcasting sector has resulted in a proliferation of radio and television stations, as seen in Table 1 below. A 2009 study showed that 89% of Ugandans regarded radio as their main source of news with 97% of households owning a radio set.[10]

Table 1: Uganda Broadcasting Sector Statistics as of June 2015 (UCC statistics)

Indicator	Number
Operational TV Stations (analogue)	28
Non Operational TV Stations (analogue)	2
Operational TV Stations (Digital Terrestrial Stations)	3
Operational TV Stations (Digital Satellite Stations)	2
Operational FM Radio Stations	292
Non Operational FM Radio Stations	12

In order to regulate and coordinate information technology services in Uganda, the National Information Technology Authority of Uganda (NITA-U) was established under the NITA–U Act of 2009

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[5] RCDF, 10 Years of RCDF, 2002/3 – 2013/14;
http://ucc.co.ug/files/downloads/10%20YEARS%20OF%20RCDF.pdf
[6] The East African, Uganda's Failed Rural ICT Projects, November 2009, http://www.balancingact-africa.com/news/en/issue-no-479/money/uganda-s-failed-rura/en
[7] WOUGNET, Assessment of the RCDF from a Gender perspective,
http://www.genderit.org/sites/default/upload/RCDF_Uganda.pdf
[8] Ministry of Finance, Budget Monitoring and Accountability Unit (BMAU) briefing paper 5/13,
http://www.finance.go.ug/dmdocuments/5-13%20Challenges%20to%20Implementing%20ICTs%20in%20Public%20Schools%20and%20Health%20Facilities%20May%202013.pdf
[9] Balancing Act, Uganda's failed Rural ICT Projects, http://www.balancingact-africa.com/news/en/issue-no-479/money/uganda-s-failed-rura/en
[10] The Steadman Group, Uganda Audience Research Survey: Final Report, Kampala, March 2009

as an autonomous body. Section 5(1) of the Act mandates the authority "to provide first level technical support and advice for critical Government information technology systems including managing the utilisation of the resources and infrastructure for centralised data centre facilities for large systems through the provision of specialised technical skills."[11]

The Authority has overseen the laying of 1,400 kms of fibre optic cable as part of **the National Data Transmission Backbone Infrastructure and e-Government Infrastructure Project (NBI/EGI). [12]** The project is aimed at connecting all major towns in the country to the optical fibre cable network and connecting Ministries and Government Departments onto the e-Government Network.[13] To-date, the backbone infrastructure has been commercialised and is enabling provision of affordable and reliable ICT services by private companies. For instance, Zoom Wireless,[14] an ISP based in Gulu, is now offering high speed internet access in northern Uganda at a fraction of the cost paid by customers in the capital Kampala, courtesy of the backbone. [15]

NITA-U is also establishing **District Business Information Centres (DBICS)[16],** as one-stop information centres in rural areas with the aim of narrowing the digital divide, facilitating access to information and government services among others to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). With a target of 30 centres, to-date six have been set up in Lira, Iganga, Rukungiri, Mityana, Kamwenge and Busia.

1.2 Relevant ICT in Governance Policies and Laws

Uganda has several laws and policies governing ICT, with many of them applicable to ICT in governance. These include the Uganda Communications Act, 2013, the NITA-U Act, 2009, the Computer Misuse Act 2011, Electronic Transactions Act 2011 and the Electronic Signatures Act 2011.[17] Others are the Regulation of Interception of Communications Act, 2010, the Anti- Terrorism Act, 2002, and the Access to Information Act, 2005. The policies include the National ICT Policy, 2013, the Rural Communications Development Fund, 2015, National Electronic Government Policy Framework of 2010 and the Information Management Services Policy.

In the sections below, we discuss how many of these laws and policies are inadequately implemented and how they promote or limit freedom of expression and access to information that are key aspects to promoting good governance.

2. ICT and Political Participation

Political participation calls for the ability of citizens to freely express their opinions, to engage in governance processes and ultimately to influence governance decisions. In Uganda, a number of mechanisms including the adoption of several ICT platforms have been put in place to enable citizen participation. The country has enjoyed a vibrant and diverse media landscape, with more than 200 radio stations, and numerous daily and weekly newspapers published primarily in the capital Kampala.

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[11] The National Information Technology Authority, Uganda Act 2009, Sec 5, http://www.nita.go.ug/sites/default/files/publications/NITA-U-Act.pdf
[12] NITA–U, National Backbone Infrastructure Project, http://nita.go.ug/projects/nbiegi-project
[13] NBI/EGI Project, http://www.nita.go.ug/projects/nbiegi-project
[14] Zoom Wireless http://www.zoom.co.ug/
[15] N. Uganda has a new Wireless ISP, http://innov8tiv.com/northern-uganda-new-wireless-isp-zoom-faster-cheaper-competitors/ August 2014
[16] DBICS http://www.nita.go.ug/projects/dbics
[17] See: Laws and regulation, http://nita.go.ug/laws

However, intimidation and attacks on the press are common. Reporting on national security, opposition politicians' activities, and corruption often elicits harsh legal and extra-legal responses.[18] Privately-owned media houses, such as The Monitor Publications, which present critical and opposition voices, have numerously suffered the wrath of the state, with the most recent one involving the closure of their newspaper and radio operations in May 2013 for ten days.[19] The state-owned *New Vision* newspaper and its vernacular publications, TV and radio outlets are accused of favouring the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) party policies and countering "the more liberal and critical views expressed on private radios."[20]

The country has legislation such as the Anti-Terrorism Act, 2002, which make it illegal to disseminate and publish news or materials that promote terrorism, with punishments of up to ten years imprisonment.[21] Further, Section 41(c) of the Uganda Communications Commission Act, 2013 Act gives power to the commission to "suspend" or "revoke" a license "where the operator is engaged in or is supporting activities amounting to a treasonable offence under the Penal Code Act."

Section 23, Subsection 2 of the Penal Code Act of 1950, defines Treason and Offences against the State as, "Any person who forms an intention to effect any of the following purposes — to compel by force or constrain the Government as by law established to change its measures or counsels or to intimidate or overawe Parliament."[22] This open-ended definition creates an opportunity for its use to gag individuals who question government practices.

Meanwhile, the Regulation of Interception of Communications Act gives wide-ranging powers to Government to intercept citizens' communications. Section 5 (1) states that a warrant shall be issued by a designated judge if there are reasonable grounds to believe that:

> *(c) the gathering of information concerning an actual threat to national security or to any national economic interest is necessary.*
> *(d) the gathering of information concerning a potential threat to public safety, national security or any national economic interest is necessary.*

Service providers are legally obliged to work with government officials in the monitoring of communications.[23] This law, and perceptions of government monitoring of citizens' communications, have abetted self-censorship by the media, thereby stifling public debate. Moreover, some critics fault the regulator (UCC) for playing into the hands of the government by creating a perception of being used to witch-hunt the political opposition.[24]

In spite of these barriers, Uganda has witnessed increased use of ICT in advancing political participation. For instance, during the 2011 national elections ICT was widely used in candidates' campaigns, in verifying the voters' roll, and in monitoring the voting process. Social media,

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[18] Freedom House (2015), Freedom of the Press, https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2015/uganda#.VZe6D0agUZM

[19] The Daily Monitor, Chronology of events leading to closure of Monitor premises, May 31, 2013 http://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/Timeline-to-the-closure--of-Monitor/-/688334/1867856/-/oj3iv2/-/index.html

[20] Sabiti Makara, Deepening Democracy through Multi-partyism, 2010, http://www.cmi.no/file/?1019

[21] The Anti-Terrorism Act 2002, Pg 7-8

[22] Penal Code Act, 1950, http://www.ulii.org/ug/legislation/consolidated-act/120

[23] The Regulation of Interception of Communications Act 2010, http://www.ulii.org/files/Regulations%20of%20Interception%20of%20Communications%20Act,%202010.pdf

[24] See UCC Suspends two Political Talk Shows, http://ugandaradionetwork.com/a/story.php?s=48689; and Clamp Down on Media by UCC, http://rosebellkagumire.com/2013/05/13/crackdown-on-freedom-of-expression-uganda-radio-talk-show-host-detained-intimidated-and-freed/ ;

automated calls, SMS, music, video and online fundraising were all enabled by ICT.[25] After the elections, some parties have maintained the use of ICT, notably social media, as seen in the chart below.

Table 2: Leading political parties' social media presence

Party	Facebook	Twitter
Democratic Party	√	
Conservative Party	√	
Forum for Democratic Change	√	√ -FDCOfficial1
Justice Forum	√	√- @JEEMAUganda
National Resistance Movement	√	√ - @NRMOnline
Uganda People's Congress	√	√ - @upcparty

The online presence of political parties has allowed more citizens to directly engage with senior political leaders including the President and Prime Minister (who frequently takes time to answer queries fielded to him). Although the Democratic Party is not officially active on social media, its leader, Norbert Mao, is quite active on Twitter with 26,000 followers as of September 2015.[26]

On Facebook, one prominent political discussion group, Ugandans at Heart, has enabled discussions of political issues.[27]
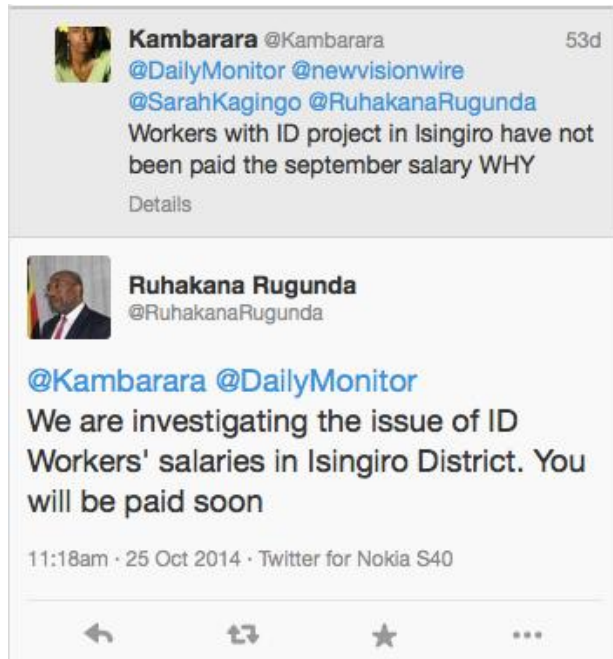

Figure 2: Sample exchange on Twitter between the Prime Minister and a citizen

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[25] CIPESA, 2012, How ICT Tools are promoting Citizen participation in Uganda, http://www.cipesa.org/?wpfb_dl=175
[26] Mao on Twitter https://twitter.com/norbertmao
[27] Ugandans at Heart https://www.facebook.com/pages/Ugandans-At-HeartUAH/132196106801171

2.1 Notable Social Media Engagements

#AskThePM: "This initiative started as a result of folks from all over the world interacting with the Prime Minister (PM) about various issues concerning Uganda via Twitter," explained Josephine Mayanja-Nkangi, who headed the Press Unit of former premier Amama Mbabazi.[28] It gives the Prime Minister an opportunity to directly interact with the press and citizens. It takes place once a month for up to two hours. During his tenure as PM, Amama Mbabazi was regarded as one of the most conversational world leaders with 95% of his tweets being replies to other twitter users, according to the Twiplomacy Study of 2014.[29]

Most conversational world leaders
PERCENTAGE OF @REPLIES

| 95% | 87% | 81% | 75% | 74% |

@AmamaMbabazi — Prime Minister of Uganda
@PaulKagame — President of Rwanda
@MashiRafael — President of Ecuador
@LMushikiwabo — Foreign Minister of Rwanda
@Erna_Solberg — Prime Minister of Norway

Figure 3: Most Conversational World Leaders (Twiplomacy Study 2014)

As of September 2015, Mbabazi's Twitter handle @AmamaMbabazi had close to 100,000 followers. In June 2014, the account had a following of 33,268. This dramatic increment was largely due to the use of social media platforms to engage with citizens in response to election-related incidents and the use of YouTube as a campaign tool – where he announced his intention to stand for the presidency in the 2016 elections.[30]

Yoweri K Museveni ✔
@KagutaMuseveni

I send my first tweet to salute Ugandan science students; they modified this vehicle's engine to run on pure ethanol. pic.twitter.com/9Ijr48K7ie

7:14pm · 24 Apr 2014 · Twitter for Android

@KagutaMuseveni
Uganda's president set up a Twitter account in March 2010 but his first tweet was sent nearly four years later on April 24, 2014.[31] Although not an avid user of Twitter, his account had just over 132,000 followers as of July 2015. By September 2015, the number of followers had grown to 169,000.

Figure 4: President Yoweri Museveni's first tweet

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[28] Email Interview, July 10th 2014

[29] Twiplomacy http://twiplomacy.com/info/africa/uganda/ and Mbabazi most conversational world leader, Daily Monitor, June 26th 2014 http://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/Mbabazi-most-conversational-world-leader-on-Twitter---survey/-/688334/2361532/-/mpt5ilz/-/index.html

[30] Uganda's Amama Mbabazi challenges President Yoweri Museveni, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-33131658

[31] Kaguta Museveni Twitter Page https://twitter.com/KagutaMuseveni

#AskTheED: Kampala Capital City Authority's Twitter hashtag #AskTheED has since October 2013 enabled citizens to interact with the head of the authority. In an interview, Peter Kaujju, Head of Public Affairs at the authority, observes, "We make it our duty to accurately inform the public and listen to people. An informed public especially in the city makes the flow of activities easy."[32] This initiative occurs monthly and lasts for an hour, occasionally longer due to the high number of participants. Besides the monthly scheduled interaction with the ED, there is continued interaction through the official twitter handle **@KCCAED** which had just over 60,000 followers as of August 2015.

Further citizen engagement is supported by many radio and TV stations who host interactive talk shows, allowing calls-in to the studio as well as submission of comments and questions by SMS and social media. **Online petitions** are also gaining popularity. One of the first notable online petitions was initiated using the change.org platform[33] and the Twitter hashtag #Kibuule to demand the resignation of the Youth Affairs Minister Ronald Kibuule following statements attributed to him condemning what he termed indecently dressed women and seeming to rationalise their rape.

3. ICT and Social Accountability

A fundamental principle of democracy is that citizens have the right to demand accountability and public actors have an obligation to be accountable. Social accountability refers to the broad range of actions and mechanisms beyond voting that citizens can use to hold the state to account, as well as actions on the part of government, civil society, media and other societal actors that promote or facilitate these efforts.[34] Thus, social accountability is citizen-demand. ICT has facilitated social accountability in a number of ways in Uganda, with radio stations for years amplifying the voice of citizens. The use of radio has been accelerated by the advent of mobile phone technology, which enables citizens to call into radio shows.

Social accountability in Uganda received a boost with the enactment of the Access to Information Act 2005 (ATI), which provides citizens the right of access to information held by the state. The Act is aimed among others to:
- promote an efficient, effective, transparent and accountable Government;
- promote transparency and accountability in all organs of the State by providing the public with timely, accessible and accurate information; and
- empower the public to effectively scrutinise and participate in Government decisions that affect them.

Although the ATI Act has only been minimally implemented, initiatives such as AskYourGov.ug enable citizens to request and receive information from government agencies through an online portal.[35] The use of ICT to extend the reach of social accountability is potentially bolstered through the requirement of equitable provision of communication services across the country as mandated by the Uganda Communications Act, 2000, which was amended in 2013.[36] This law requires UCC to ensure ICT access and infrastructure provision and distribution throughout the country, including

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[32] Email Interview, July 2nd 2014

[33] Kibuule Resignation Online Petition https://www.change.org/p/rebecca-kadaga-speaker-of-the-ugandan-parliament-demand-resignation-of-youth-affairs-minister-ronald-kibuule

[34] Social Accountability; What does it mean for the World Bank, Chapter 2 pg 5 http://www.worldbank.org/socialaccountability_sourcebook/PrintVersions/Conceptual%2006.22.07.pdf

[35] See http://askyourgov.ug/

[36] Uganda Communications Act, 2000 Section 2(g) http://www.actvuganda.org/sites/default/files/Uganda%20Communications%20%20Act%20Cap%20106.pdf

through the establishment of the Rural Communications Development Fund.

Furthermore, the National Electronic Government Policy Framework of 2010 aims at "continuous improvement in the efficiency of and access to government information and services to meet citizens' expectations."[37] The framework has the potential to improve social accountability that is currently hampered by low technology use by government and difficulties in public information provision. Fully functional district websites, government e-services portals, various online services like tax payments, salary and wage processing, budget monitoring and online government tendering as provided for by the framework, can all go a long way in facilitating social accountability.

3.1 Notable ICT-enabled Social Accountability Initiatives

Know Your Budget: Set up by the Finance Ministry in 2013, this portal allows citizens to access and give feedback on budget performance at national and local levels.[38] Through the portal, Government budget expenditure and plans for the various levels from national to the local government down to the sub-county level are available. A toll free hotline and help desk for inquiries complement the online portal.
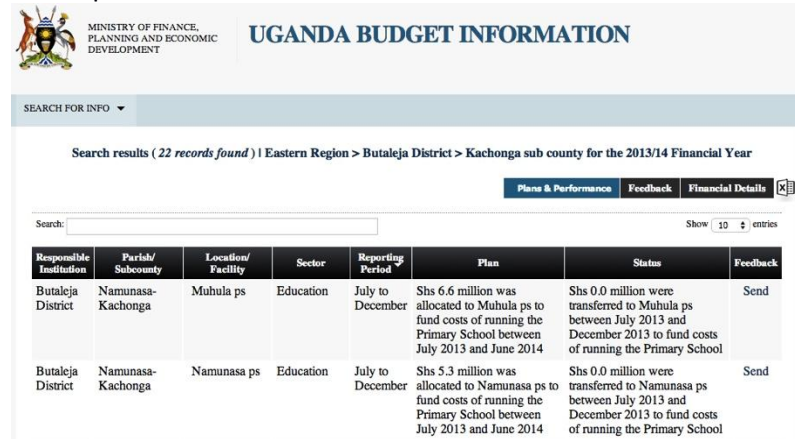

Figure 5: Snapshot of the Know Your Budget portal

Despite this bend towards openness, the country is also ranked amongst the most corrupt in the world, coming in at position 142 out of 175 countries surveyed by the Transparency International global corruption index.[39] The East African Bribery Index of 2014 places the likelihood of corruption in Uganda at 17.9%, compared to 12.3% in neighbouring Kenya. The survey found that respondents in the country paid a bribe as a means of accessing services.[40] The reduction of physical interactions especially for Government services through the use of ICT could help reduce corruption incidents.

Meanwhile, the Inspectorate of Government (IGG) has launched an ICT-based initiative to receive corruption information and tip-offs from the public. Through the **IGG SMS Corruption Tracker,** a case can be reported to the inspectorate via the website[41] or the SMS platform that was launched in June 2013.[42] Incidents can be reported by texting CORRUPT to 6009 toll free. While this initiative is welcome, there are concerns over the safety of whistle-blowers whose personal data (registered phone number) is shared during the submission. Besides, with few corruption scandals decisively

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[37] National Electronic Government (e-Government) Framework, Draft (2010)
[38] Budget Monitoring Portal http://www.budget.go.ug
[39] Transparency International, Corruption Perception Index, http://www.transparency.org/cpi2014
[40] Transparency International Kenya, The East African Bribery Index 2014,
http://www.tikenya.org/index.php/the-east-african-bribery-index
[41] Report a Case to the IGG, http://www.igg.go.ug/complaints/
[42] IGG Launches SMS Platform, http://news.ugo.co.ug/igg-launches-sms-platform-to-fight-corruption/

handled by government, citizens are becoming weary of reporting cases.[43] The lack of a witness protection law exacerbates this frustration.

In the education sector, **eduTrac** is a mobile phone-based data collection system piloted by UNICEF in partnership with the Ministry of Education to monitor education services delivery. Districts identify bottlenecks at school level, track accountability for resolution of issues arising from eduTrac reports and improve planning for education.[44] EduTrac receives data from schools through a poll system to reporters that are categorised in different groups such as Headmasters, Literacy Teachers, English teachers, etc. The questions asked are unique to each group. Regular reports are expected from the head teacher, School Management Committee (SMC) members and sub-county members of the Girls' Education Movement (GEM), thereby creating partnerships among all education stakeholders. District officials are then expected to follow up on these reports and prioritise visits while at a higher level these reports feed into the planning of the education ministry. eduTrac has over 9,000 **active** reporters with 2,819 schools being tracked.[45] Due to its dependence on an open source framework and possible use on feature phones, it is likely that its spread will not be hindered by technology. Messages are sent toll free to short code 6200.

3.1.1 Civil Society Driven initiatives

There are notable civil society efforts in promoting use of ICT in social accountability. These include:
- **Parliament Watch,** an initiative of the Centre for Policy Analysis that monitors parliament on a regular basis and provides information and expert analysis. It uses a website, Twitter, Facebook, GooglePlus, Pinterest and Email.[46] As of September 2015, its Twitter account had just over 15,000 followers while Facebook had 20,000 likes. Whereas Parliament Watch is a very welcome initiative, it is likely to be patronised mostly by the elite for the foreseeable future considering the choice of internet-based media which it currently uses.
- Black Monday Movement (BMM), an initiative launched by ActionAid Uganda through a combination of several approaches including ICT, embarked on creating awareness about social accountability to fight corruption in Uganda.[47] The initiative uses television, radio, internet (email, website, Facebook, Twitter, and Google+), road shows and publications (online and hardcopy) to create awareness about corruption.
- **Ureport** was launched in 2011 and it enables young Ugandans to speak out on issues affecting their communities. With just under 300,000 registered reporters as of September 2015, Ureport is the most recognised civic participation ICT system in Uganda.[48] Initiated by UNICEF Uganda, it equips mobile phone users with the tools to establish and enforce new standards of transparency and accountability in development programming and services provision.[49] One becomes a Ureporter by sending a text message to the toll free number 8500. An issue is decided upon by UNICEF's Ureport team and partner organisations and a question on the selected topic is sent using SMS to the Ureporters. The recipients can reply to the message free of charge. Any SMS compatible phone can be used and this is one of the reasons for the rapid adoption of Ureport. The information received can then be analysed in

[43] Africans Losing Faith as their Governments fail to fight Corruption, The 1847 Post, August 2014
http://www.1847post.com/?q=article/africans-losing-faith-their-governments-fail-fight-corruption
[44] EduTrac, Tracking and Monitoring Education, 2013
http://www.unicef.org/education/files/EduTrac_Documentation_-_March_2013.pdf
[45] Edutrac https://www.rapidsms.org/projects/edutrac/
[46] See: About Parliament Watch Uganda, http://parliamentwatchuganda.org/about-parliament-watch-uganda/;
Twitter account: https://www.twitter.com/pwatchug; on Facebook
https://www.facebook.com/pages/Parliament-Watch-Uganda/519752108067598?ref=br_tf.
[47] Black Monday Movement, http://www.actionaid.org/uganda/campaign/black-monday-movement
[48] Ureport Website http://www.ureport.ug/
[49] U-report application revolutionizes social mobilization, empowering Ugandan youth,
http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/uganda_62001.html

multiple ways and results presented by age, district, gender, among others, as seen below.
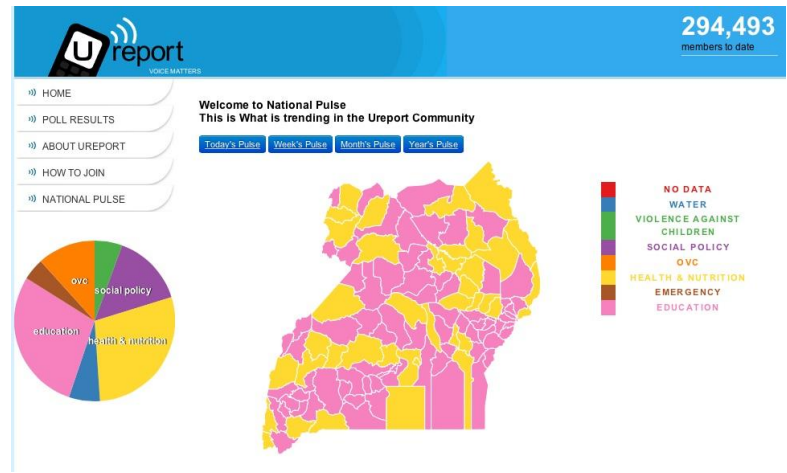

Figure 6: Snapshot of UReport trending reports

Various civic and political leaders use feedback from Ureport to act upon issues raised. Results are also fed onto a website that aggregates them and avails them in an easy to interpret format for any interested party.

4. ICT and Public Services Delivery

Back in 1999, a committee was set up to work on a National ICT Policy which culminated in one being passed by the cabinet in 2003. The Government committed itself to champion the development and use of ICT in the country by setting up the Ministry of ICT in 2006 and its subsidiary agencies – NITA-U and UCC. These efforts have spurred the use of ICT in public services delivery. The National Electronic Government Policy Framework, 2011 also aims to transform the operations of government using ICT as a tool to improve internal efficiency, service delivery to citizens and businesses, and community participation.

Among other public bodies, the Uganda Revenue Authority as one of the early ICT adopters is implementing the URA Online Portal - https://www.ura.go.ug - where citizens can file tax returns, transfer motor vehicle ownership, process Stamp Duty, and carry out many other tax-related services online.

Table 3: Select public facing ICT related Government services

Service	Functions
Integrated Financial Management System (IFMS)	Processing and monitoring of key Government processes like: Budgeting; Accounting and Reporting; Purchasing; Payments/Payables; Revenue Management; Cash Management; and Debt Management
Land Information Management System - http://lis-uganda.go.ug/	Provides accessible, efficient, and transparent land administration services delivery by simplifying and automating the procedures for land and real estate transactions. The system provides a unified registry for land and real estate, deed plans and market information.
National Social Security Fund Online - http://www.nssfug.org	• Avails e-statements to members • Avails forms for download online • Online contact for membership • Offers other self service activities

Service	Functions
Uganda Registration Services Bureau - http://www.ursb.go.ug	• Registering trademarks and copyright • Liquidation and official receiver services • Online business name search • Business and civil registration forms
Uganda Revenue Authority Web: http://www.ura.go.ug Twitter: https://twitter.com/urauganda Fb: https://www.facebook.com/URApage	• E-Services – tax registration, payments, motor vehicle verification and stamp duty declarations • Tax Tools – motor vehicle tax calculator, document authentication • Tax Assistant – online help desk service • Compliance – Whistle Blowing
Kampala Capital City Authority Web: http://www.kcca.go.ug Twitter: https://www.twitter.com/kccaug Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/kccaug	• Online support • Avails application forms • Avails publications
National Government portal - http://www.gov.ug/	This is a centralised portal providing access to all government services. It curates information and services from all government ministries, departments and agencies websites.

Public utility providers for water and electricity have also embraced ICT. The National Water and Sewerage Cooperation (NWSC) maintains a website that provides information on services, tariffs and how to pay. A toll free helpline number is also available. Users are also able to apply for new connections through the portal.

Figure 7: NWSC online application for new connections

Registered users are able to check account balances online and browse statements online. Similar services are available through a mobile application for Android which is also available for free download through Google.[50] The App is enabled for payment for customers through telecom service provider MTN.[51] The national Electricity supplier, UMEME, also provides online information on tariffs, services, billing, metering and power outages. Downloadable forms are available for new connections. Complaints can be submitted and faults reported online.[52]

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[50] Google App Store, https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.nwsc.mobilepayment&hl=en
[51] NWSC Mobile App, https://www.nwsc.co.ug/index.php/nwsc-mobile-app
[52] UMEME, http://www.umeme.co.ug/index.php

Meanwhile, government departments are embracing the use of social media, which could potentially improve services delivery to citizens. Below, we present some of the government departments and the social media sites on which they have a presence.

Table 4: online media presence of selected public institutions

Government Agency	Platform			
	Facebook	Twitter	Youtube	Website
Uganda Police	√	√	√	√
Kampala Capital City Authority	√	√	√	√
Inspectorate of Government	√	√	√	√
Uganda Revenue Authority	√	√	√	√
Parliament of Uganda	√	√	√	√
Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development	√	√		√
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	√	√	√	√
Uganda Bureau of Statistics	√	√		√
Uganda National Bureau of Standards	√	√		√
Uganda Communications Commission	√	√		√
Bank of Uganda	√	√	√	√
Office of the Prime Minister	√	√	√	√
Office of the President	√			√
Uganda Media Centre	√	√	√	√

Initiatives that utilise ICT for public services delivery have been boosted by supporting legislation such as the cyber laws; as well as by ICT-related policies and regulations such as the Information Management Services Policy, National E-Government Framework, the National Information Security Framework, and Guidelines for Development and Management of Government Websites, among others.

The cyber laws govern the use of ICT in relation to privacy, integrity and security. Through the Electronic Signatures Act, 2011, Government recognised electronic signatures by law, thereby boosting its efforts to offer ICT-based services to the general public and the business community. By preventing unlawful access and misuse of information systems, the Computer Misuse Act, 2011 provides the Government with the relevant protection against potential abuse of ICT services. The Computer Misuse Act spells out offences in Sections 12–20, with sentences ranging from five years to life imprisonment for offenders. Meanwhile, the Information Management Services (IMS) Policy aims to manage how information is accessed in Government.[53]

Towards the end of 2014, Uganda's government issued a draft Data Protection and Privacy Bill for public comment. The Bill seeks to protect the privacy of the individual and personal data by regulating the collection and processing of personal information. It provides for the rights of persons whose data is collected and the obligations of data collectors and data processors; and regulates the

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[53] Draft Information Management Services Policy, v.8, Feb 2011
http://www.researchictafrica.net/countries/uganda/Draft_Information_Management_Services_Policy_2011.pdf

use or disclosure of personal information. However, numerous gaps and problematic clauses in the bill raised concern including its open and ambiguous interpretation, unclear extent of guaranteed protections and security, and the penalties suggested.[54]

To further promote the use of e-government services, the Electronic Transactions Act, 2011 was enacted. This Act removes legal and operational barriers to electronic transactions by recognising the use of electronic signatures, notarisation of documents, contracts, expression of interest, electronic filing and issuing of documents, trade between Government and citizens, application for documentation, and electronic contract conclusion (See Sections 6, 13, 14, 18 and 22 of the Act). The provisions of the Act reduce on the need for physical interaction with Government officials which can help minimise corruption and improve on convenience and efficiency.

The Uganda E-Government Readiness study of 2013 reported that an estimated 61% of government institutions provide services online. However, very few businesses and citizens were satisfied with the e-services provided, while many were not aware of the e-services on offer.[55] Michael Niyitegeka, an IT Consultant, observed that enabling policies and legislation had not translated into tangible service delivery initiatives. "A lot of work and government services are still largely manual with the exception of a few government service providers like URA. Laws and policies are unlikely to change the way government operates. There must be an equal effort to change the employee mindset around using technology in service delivery," he said.[56]

Some sectoral initiatives that use ICT to improve public services delivery have been also been rolled out. For example, **mTrac** run by the Ministry of Health aims to strengthen disease surveillance and the national medicines monitoring system, and to generate community action for improved health system accountability to reduce stock shortages at health facilities.[57] The phone-based system has three sources of data. Health workers input information on disease incidents, cases managed and medicine stocks. The information is aggregated, tabulated and graphed online for approval and eventual submission by the District Health Team to the Health Ministry. Village Health Teams composed of volunteer village health workers based in the communities, as well as community members, avail information through an anonymous SMS hotline - 8200.[58]

This initiative offers improved service delivery, citizen participation and more accountability. The system currently has 12,013 district health officials, 18,690 health workers and 7,381 village health team members registered. In addition, the health services complaints hotline has continued to grow with over 400 actionable health reports received every month.[59]

5. ICT and Citizen Engagement

Citizen engagement involves increasing citizens' knowledge about a community issue; encouraging citizens to apply that knowledge; using that knowledge to improve the community; creating opportunities for citizens to engage each other and ensuring that these opportunities are regular and on-going.[60] Good citizen engagement can support the effective functioning of democracy, the

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[54] CIPESA, Reflections on Uganda's Draft Data Protection and Privacy Bill 2014,
http://www.cipesa.org/?wpfb_dl=185
[55] Electronic Government Readiness Assessment Survey, 2013 http://www.nita.go.ug/publication/e-government-readiness-assessment-2012-report
[56] Key Stakeholder Interview, Michael Niyitegeka
[57] Mtrac http://www.mtrac.ug
[58] How mTrac Works http://www.mtrac.ug/content/how-mtrac-works
[59] Catherine N. Makumbi, Uganda, 25 March 2015: UNICEF Innovations critical to avert Typhoid outbreak,
http://www.unicef.org/esaro/5440_uga2015_avert-typhoid.html
[60] Allan Bassler, et al., 2008, Developing Effective Citizen Engagement; A How to Guide for Community Leaders,
http://www.rural.palegislature.us/effective_citizen_engagement.pdf

legitimacy of government, the successful implementation of policy and the achievement of social outcomes.[61]

Open talk shows that have members of the general public debating while others freely call in have become common on both radio and TV. The spread of low-cost smart phones is increasing mobile internet access and usage.[62] As of December 2012, Facebook had 562,240 Ugandan registered accounts with a high likelihood that this number doubled in the last two years. [63] In the same year, Social Bakers[64], summarised Uganda's statistics of Facebook usage as in the table below.

Table 5: Demographics of Uganda's Facebook Users 2012

Category	Percentage
Gender	
Male Users	68.8%
Female Users	31.2%
Age Demographics	
16 – 17 Years	6.7%
18 – 24 Years	49.2%
25 – 34 Years	29.5%
35 – 44 Years	6.3%

As indicated in the ICT and Political Participation section above, Ugandan politicians and various government officials, including President Museveni, use social media. To further facilitate social media use in improving government interactions with citizens, NITA-U developed Social Media Guidelines for government departments. [65]

The Access to Information Act, 2005 encourages citizen engagement by giving citizens the right to access government information as stipulated in Section 5 (1).[66] Similarly, the Copyright and Neighbouring Rights Act, 2006 expressly lifts copyright protection from public benefit works. These include enactments like Acts, statutes and decrees; reports made by government-appointed committees or commissions of inquiry; news of the day like reports of fresh events or current information.[67] This enables the citizenry to utilise such information to engage with government without fear of litigation. The copyright law further caters for Fair Use,[68] thereby offering more liberties to citizens to utilise available government material.

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[61] Citizen Engagement, Open Government Guide, http://www.opengovguide.com/topics/citizen-engagement/
[62] Africa Telecoms Outlook, 2014
    http://files.informatandm.com/uploads/2013/11/Africa_Telecoms_Outlook_Low_resolution.pdf
[63] Internet Stats on Uganda http://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.htm#ug
[64] Social Bakers http://www.socialbakers.com/
[65] Government of Uganda Social Media Guide http://www.nita.go.ug/publication/government-uganda-social-media-guide
[66] Access to Information Act, 2005, Section 5(1); *Every citizen has a right of access to information and records in the possession of the State or any public body, except where the release of the information is likely to prejudice the security or sovereignty of the State or interfere with the right to the privacy of any other person.*
[67] The Copyright and Neighbouring Rights Act, 2006, Section 7
[68] Fair Use, Wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fair_use ; Fair use is a limitation and exception to the exclusive right granted by copyright law to the author of a creative work.

Government has been criticised for not fully implementing the access to information law. Few MDAs have fulfilled the requirements specified in Section 7 of the Act for proactive disclosures.[69] However, media expert Simon Kaheru argues that accessing information from Government is only tedious if one does not know where to go for what information.[70] He says there is a need nonetheless to sensitise both government officials and those seeking information so that the process is smooth.

In an effort to facilitate citizens' right to information, the Uganda government through the Ministry of Information and National Guidance in partnership with civil society organisations in August 2014 launched the **Ask Your Government Uganda (www.askyourgov.ug)** initiative. The online portal enables citizens to make information requests to information officers from the different ministries, departments and agencies of the Ugandan Government.[71]
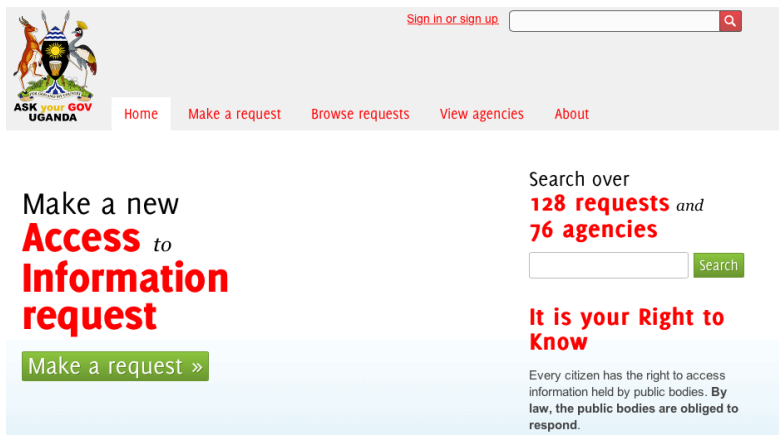

Figure 8: Snapshot of the Ask Your Government Uganda Portal

As of July 2015, there were 76 MDAs registered on the AskYourGov portal and up to 128 requests for information had been logged through the portal, of which about half had received responses. Only 25 of them had been classified by the requesters as successful. Despite conducting training drives for government officials and the media since the launch of the portal,[72] the low usage and compliance statistics reflect a slow uptake of the portal by government officials and potential users of the system.

Online interactivity usually demands quick and timely responses if it is to achieve its competitive edge over the usually cumbersome offline alternatives. However, citizen engagement tends to be hindered by the tendency of government information officers to maintain a culture of secrecy and reluctance to release information. As various Government agencies are encouraged to embrace the use of ICT, a simultaneous thrust among the citizens will yield greater engagement and hence pass on the benefits associated with the use of technology.

Below are some of the initiatives established to facilitate citizen engagement through ICT use. Among them is **Uspeak,** an initiative of the Parliament of Uganda and the National Democratic Institute in partnership with Gov2U, which enables citizens to share their views and request information and action on issues from Members of Parliament (MP) through the use of text

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[69] Access to Information Act, 2005 Sec 7, p. 6-7 Manual of functions and index of records of public body.
[70] Key Informant Interview
[71] Ask Your Gov, http://askyourgov.ug/
[72] Uganda Gov't Officials Trained In Using Right To Information Portal, http://www.cipesa.org/2014/11/uganda-govt-officials-trained-in-using-right-to-information-portal/ and Advancing the Right to Information Amongst Ugandan Journalists, http://www.cipesa.org/2015/02/advancing-the-right-to-information-amongst-ugandan-journalists/

messages, voicemail or by leaving a message with the Uspeak call centre. [73] Reports and requests are aggregated by issue, which allows MPs to track the information, including number of contacts and types of issues, and to compare them to the number of messages received by other lawmakers on these issues.[74] Participating MPs have private inboxes which sort the messages, allowing them to mark the cases as pending or closed. The initiative has incorporated Twitter and Facebook with 82 followers[75] and 836 likes[76] respectively as of June 2015. The low social media figures indicate that the initiative still has a long way to go in reaching citizens. Indeed, as of June 2015, the last publically available posts on Facebook were dated back to a year earlier in June 2014.

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[73] Uspeak Puts Ugandans in touch with their MPs, https://www.ndi.org/uganda_uspeak_launch
[74] Uspeak Online http://www.parliament.go.ug/uspeak/
[75] Uspeak on Twitter https://www.twitter.com/uspeakug
[76] Uspeak on Facebook https://www.facebook.com/uspeakug

6. Recommendations

1. Whereas a number of laws are in place to support ICT use in governance and citizens' participation, the level of awareness and implementation among ministries, departments and agencies remains low. Government should review the effectiveness of existing laws and build the capacity of officials to promote compliance with the laws and harness ICT tools for improved public service delivery, accountability and engagement.

2. Similarly, awareness of laws and the existence of ongoing initiatives by citizens is low. Government should work with all stakeholders such as civil society, academia and private sector to promote awareness of the laws and adoption of the platforms that enable citizens' participation and government accountability. This awareness should be created through multiple online and offline channels and skills training drives.

3. Amend laws and policies that hamper political participation. A number of laws have broad terminologies that need to be properly defined to avoid curtailing freedom of expression, freedom of the press, access to information and the right to privacy. Current provisions in the UCC Act, 2013 Section 41 (c), the Regulation of Interception of Communications Act, 2010 Section 5 (1) and the Penal Code Act, 1950 Section 23 (2) are open to abuse by law enforcement agencies as they are not subject to independent oversight and therefore could be used to undermine citizens' participation in governance processes and curtail critical opinion.

4. Compliance monitoring: Existing and future policy objectives should prioritise regular reporting that includes clear indicators that provide stakeholders with the extent of progress, achievement of objectives, and identify areas of adjustment.

5. Mainstreaming gender and other marginalised groups in policy and practice. Beyond making gender-friendly policies and laws, there should be full gender integration in ICT programmes design and impact assessment. This will assist with the collection of gender disaggregated statistics which can be used for future analysis, planning and monitoring of ICT-based governance initiatives.

6. Government should devise strategies to embrace proactive information disclosures and dissemination and strive to close the existing communication gap between citizens, the legislature, executive and local governments. These may include skills training targeting officials, frequent updates to websites and wider adoption of social media engagements.

7. The data protection and privacy law needs to be enacted. Further to the call for stakeholder input, the Bill drafting phase should engage with and seek consultations with stakeholders including civil society, private sector, and academia for an extended period prior to tabling before parliament to ensure that the bill passed into law is inclusive, accommodative and addresses the concerns raised by all stakeholders.

8. Operationalisation of Laws and Policies still remains a challenge with barriers including lack of prioritisation and lack of funding. The already passed ICT laws and policies can only be fully functional and have impact if they operate within a prescribed National ICT Policy and budget. Accordingly, the National ICT Policy 2014 -2019 needs to be passed to serve the various subsector policies already in place.