Foreword

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have the potential to enhance citizen advocacy and engagement, and to increase government transparency and accountability. In many countries, ICT have been deployed to enhance communication and to improve access to important information.

The Collaboration on International ICT Policy in East and Southern Africa (CIPESA) conducted this study as part of a wider intervention aimed to catalyse the use of ICT in democratic processes in Uganda. The report seeks to provide a review of the different ICT tools being used to promote transparency, accountability, and citizen participation in Uganda. It examines the utility and shortcomings of the tools in use, the challenges they face, and the factors contributing to their success. Finally, it offers suggestions for improving the utility, reach, and, hopefully, the success of initiatives that utilise ICT to improve citizen participation.

The research was made possible by funding from the Swedish Program for ICT in Developing Regions (Spider), which is supporting projects in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, in the areas of education, health, and governance. This scoping study provides baseline information that directly benefits ongoing and planned interventions in the ICT-for-Democracy arena. The results shall directly inform some wider actions in catalysing civic participation and democracy monitoring using ICT, which CIPESA and other SPIDER partners are undertaking in East Africa.

Spider has provided seed-funding to a range of organisations that form the ICT4Democracy in East Africa Network (www.ict4democracy.org), who will all benefit from the results of this study. These organisations include iHub Research (Kenya), the Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC), the Tanzania Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance (CHRAGG), Transparency International (TI) Uganda, Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET), and CIPESA.

The findings of this research could equally serve as an insightful guide to other Ugandan, and developing countries' interventions, in promoting the use of ICT in monitoring service delivery and in a broad range of governance processes.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have the potential to enhance citizen advocacy and engagement, and to increase government transparency and accountability. They have been deployed to enhance communication and to improve access to important information. In Uganda, while there is a trend that points to increased use of ICT in support of civic participation, there remain numerous challenges.

The so-called Arab Spring played out in the centre of debate on the power of the internet, and particularly social media, as tools for civic participation and the promotion of democracy. There are indeed various ways in which the internet could enable and motivate participation.

Whyte and Macintosh (2002) observe that there has recently been a gradual awareness of the need to consider new tools for public engagement that enable a wider audience to contribute to the policy debate and where contributions themselves are both broader and deeper. Similarly, Castells (1996) explains that the internet provides easy access to information and offers a sphere for communication which can enhance political interest and pull citizens into the democratic process.

Moreover, Chadwick (2006) observes that the relative anonymity of the online world renders individuals less accountable for their actions, so they feel empowered to speak up against more powerful actors because they have less fear of punishment. These online political processes can provide flexible options for input, such as allowing citizens the choice of when and where to participate from (Gehring V.D [ed] 2007).

These factors could make the internet a crucial medium for enabling governments to interact with citizens, and for citizens to interact with other citizens and to participate in civic matters. In the light of the overthrow of the Egyptian and Tunisian governments in 2011, Facebook, Twitter and other social media were hailed as great mobilising tools that contributed to these 'revolutions' – the same way these ICT also played a crucial role in uprisings in countries such as Libya, Yemen, and Syria.

During Uganda's February–March 2011 elections, ICT tools were used broadly, for campaigning, tallying results, monitoring the actions of political groups and the electoral body, for civic education, and for activism. The tools included mobile phones, automated calls, crowd sourcing platforms, radio and television, as well as social media. All these may have contributed to transparency in the elections, if not necessarily to the voter turn-out.[1]

Worryingly, many Ugandans do not participate in civic matters, thereby undermining efforts to promote transparency in the conduct of public affairs. Many never take part in any community activities or debates on governance, and a big number do not register to vote, or do not turn up to cast their ballot even when they are on the voters' roll. For instance, only 59% of registered voters cast their ballots in the February 2011 presidential election.[2]

Furthermore, surveys show that only 10% of Ugandan households have a member that participates in local governance, with the poor access to information largely responsible for this low level of participation.[3]

The proliferation of ICT means there are now more ways in which those who otherwise are indifferent to civic affairs could participate. As the recent elections exemplified, numerous tools have been embraced by Ugandans, which promise to enable new ways of civic participation and democracy monitoring. In Uganda, market penetration for voice stands at 45% with a population coverage of close to 100%. Mobile accounts for more than 90% of new connections, with 910,000 new subscribers being added each year.[4]

According to the regulator, the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC), the entry of new service providers and increased capacity investment in broadband by operators have resulted in increased internet penetration and changes in the methods of access. Most Ugandans access the internet on their mobile phones. With 850,200 mobile and 84,558 fixed internet subscribers and the cost of bandwidth coming down, the numbers are bound to continue growing in the coming years. The regulator said there were more than 4.5 million internet users in Uganda, or 14% of the population, as of July 2011.[5]

Social media users are also growing. Alexa.com website traffic rankings indicate that Facebook is the most popular

[1] See 'Sophisticated technology and refined rigging in Uganda's 2011 presidential elections,' Upgraid, April 2011. http://upgraid.wordpress.com/2011/04/14/sophisticated-technology-and-refined-rigging/ and 'Use of ICTs in Uganda's Elections', available at http://ondouglas.blogspot.com/2011/02/2011-uganda-elections-and-use-of-icts.html

[2] Electoral Commission, Presidential Elections 2011, Results by District. http://www.ec.or.ug/Elec_results/2011_Pres_dis.pdf

[3] Uganda Bureau of Statistics, Uganda National Household Survey Report 2009/2010

[4] UCC, 2010/11 Posts & Telecommunications Market Review

[5] 5UCC, 2010/11 Posts & Telecommunications Market Review

website in Uganda, while YouTube is the 5th most visited site in the country. Twitter and Blogger are 9th and 10th respectively.[6] These technologies enable more efficient and speedier generation and sharing of multimedia content, including by sections of community that hitherto were only consumers.

Additionally, the ubiquity of the mobile phone, its usability in accessing a range of services, as well as the relatively low cost of maintaining it, made it a worthwhile tool for study as far as channels for raising citizen participation go. This is especially so given that mobile handsets are increasingly becoming more than just tools for voice communication and short messaging; they are also tools that allow generation, storage and transmission of multimedia content, and also allow for fast access to the internet.

The potential for using ICT in Uganda is continuing to grow, fuelled by reductions in mobile tariffs and bandwidth prices, greater availability of fibre optics bandwidth, increased ICT literacy, and supportive government-led ICT initiatives such as the second Rural Communications Development policy. This presents an opportunity to leverage on ICT to reach wider sections of Ugandans and play a more crucial role in enabling civic participation.

It was therefore important to examine the ways in which ICT-for-democracy could be deployed to give it a higher chance of meeting its objectives. Who the actors are, the main challenges, success factors, and opportunities for intervention, were also issues this research investigated.

In this study, the participative activities considered were broad, and included demanding for social services such as education, contacting leaders, taking part in discussions, asking for accountability and transparency in the conduct of public affairs, campaigning, voting/electing, and voicing opinions. The ICT based tools included online media, crowd sourcing platforms, SMS, web and mobile based voter registers, electronic votes tallying systems, and automated calls.

1.1 Background Information on Uganda

Located in East Africa, Uganda has a population of 34 million people and per capita income of US$514.[7] The country is governed under a multiparty political system, introduced following a 2005 referendum. The first multi-party elections were held in 2002, and were won by the incumbent, President Yoweri Museveni, who has been in power since January 1986.

In 1987, Uganda embraced a decentralised system of governance, whereby the central government divested itself of some powers and responsibilities of administration, planning and finance, and vested them into local governments. Decentralisation aimed to enhance citizen participation in the decision-making and service delivery process, and was informed by the need to raise efficiency in service delivery.

Uganda's 1995 constitution provides for the freedoms of expression, speech and association, as well as the right to information. Uganda was among the first countries in Africa to enact a freedom of information law,[8] and remains one of not more than 10 on the continent with such legislation. However, there are still numerous restrictions to accessing information provided for in the Act. In June 2011, the government passed regulations to operationalise the Access to Information Act 2005. However, some provisions make access costly and difficult and, as such, they are not in the spirit of the strong right to information provision found in the Constitution.[9]

The enactment of an ICT Policy in 2003 provided an opportunity for leveraging on ICT in development and governance. Moreover, in the last four years, the government has been laying fibre-optic backbone infrastructure around the country, as well as infrastructure to support e-governance in at least 27 ministries. Besides, the country has since 2003 operated a universal access fund, the Rural Communications Development Fund (RCDF). These initiatives have been backed up by a series of policy and legislative instruments.

However, some of the laws have drawn sharp criticism for curtailing citizens' right to information and privacy. In 2010, the government passed the Interception of Communications Act which potentially threatens free expression through the restriction of content and access to information; and provides undue powers to state organs to intercept private communications.[10] The Anti-terrorism Act of 2002[11] and the proposed Public Order Management Bill are others criticised for curtailing citizens' rights.[12,13]

[6] Top 500 sites in Uganda, http://www.alexa.com/topsites/countries/UG

[7] International Monetary Fund, Uganda, World Economic Outlook Database, April 2010.

[8] The Access to Information Act provides for the right of access to information pursuant to article 41 of the Constitution; prescribes the classes of information referred to in that article, and procedure for obtaining access to that information.

[9] Gaia Larsen, Carole Excell and Peter G. Veit (June 30, 2011) Uganda's Access to Information Regulations: Another Bump in the Road to Transparency, World Resources Institute

[10] National Information Technology Authority, Cyber Laws. http://nita.go.ug/index.php/policies-/cyber-laws

[11] The Anti-Terrorism Act 2002, http://www.icj.org/IMG/ATA.pdf

[12] Human Rights Network, Uganda, Quick Analysis of Uganda's Anti Terrorism Act 2002. http://hurinet.or.ug/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_details&gid=82&Itemid=60

[13] The Daily Monitor, December 2011, Implications of the Proposed Public Order Law. http://www.monitor.co.ug/OpEd/Commentary/-/689364/1287132/-/12obrxez/-/

Although Uganda has a vibrant media - both private and government owned - harassment of journalists is common. Arrests of journalists and shut downs of media houses over published content believed to be anti-government have been common in the last five years.[14]

There have also been government attempts to interfere with citizens' online activity. For instance, in the heat of the Walk-to-Work campaign, the regulatory body directed internet service providers to temporarily block access to Facebook and Twitter.[15] The Walk-to-work campaign was organised by political and activist groups dubbed Activists for Change (A4C), who mobilised citizens to protest government's apparent inaction in the face of spiraling food and fuel prices. Social media was widely used for mobilisation, as well as for publicising the vicious response of security agencies to the campaign. The regulator reasoned that the move to block social media sites was intended ""to eliminate the connection and sharing of information that incites the public".

1.2 Review of eGovernment in Uganda

Over the last few years, the Uganda Government has placed greater attention on ICT, creating a policy environment favourable to service provision and proliferation. However, ICT services are out of reach for many Ugandans, as teledensity remains under 50% (and yet nearly half of phone owners in the country have more than one mobile phone number) and internet usage is at 14%. In 2003, Uganda adopted a national ICT policy, a draft revision of which was finalised by the Ministry of ICT in 2010. The formation of this ministry in 2006 was expected to catalyse the uptake of ICT. Crucially, many of the objectives of the country's ICT policy have a direct bearing on improving connectivity, including for local governments and hitherto marginalised groups, as they do for the delivery of eGovernment services.

In 2010, Uganda completed an IT Policy to guide how the use of IT would facilitate interactions within government as well as between the government and citizens. Two of its five guiding principles are that "Government shall encourage citizen participation"; and that the "Government shall ensure access to IT services to men and women in both rural and urban areas".[16] Similarly, the country's National Development Plan emphasises the need to promote eGovernment services with a view to improve efficiency in the public sector.[17] Moreover, Uganda's 2010 eGovernment framework has its stated mission as to "ensure online accessibility of all government services and opportunities for community participation in a friendly, transparent and efficient manner for all sections of the society."[18]

A few government departments such as Immigration and the Uganda Revenue Authority offer some e-services, but these are in their early stages. Numerous other programmes are underway in various departments. Government is increasingly using ministry websites to provide information such as funds releases, budgets out-turns, and departmental reports. However, most websites are rarely updated and are hardly interactive.

Further, the National Information and Technology Authority of Uganda (NITA-U) and UCC have initiatives aimed to improve ICT access in rural areas. The District Business Information Centres (DBICs) project seeks to promote affordable and timely access to ICT in rural Uganda, which would enable the exchange of information and experience among government officials and their communities via electronic means. Information centres have been established in six districts.[19]

At the grassroots, there have been a couple of pilots which attempted to use ICT to increase transparency in local governments, although these have hardly achieved their objectives and have struggled to attain sustainability. They included Apac eSociety,[20] Kasese eSociety,[21] and DistrictNet.[22]

Uganda liberalised the telecommunications sector in 1998, and currently has 47 licensed communications service providers, of whom five offer both voice and data services. Additionally, Uganda's Rural Communications Development Fund (RCDF) established in 2001 aims to provide access to basic communications services within a reasonable distance to all people in Uganda, leverage investment into rural communications, and promote ICT usage. The RCDF has run since 2003, and set up a couple of projects as enumerated on the next page:

[14] See, Freedom House Condemns Crackdown on Journalists, Social Media in Uganda, http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=70&release=1401
[15] Karen Allen, June 2011; African jitters over blogs and social media. BBC News, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13786143
[16] Ministry of ICT, 'IT Policy for Uganda', Final draft, February 2010. http://ict.go.ug/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_details&gid=48&Itemid=61
[17] National Planning Authority, 'National Development Plan 2010-2015,' April 2010
[18] Ministry of ICT, National Electronic Government (e-Government) Framework, Draft Final, June 2010
[19] Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, District Business Information Centres Project. http://ict.go.ug/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=66:district-business-information-center&catid=25:the-project&Itemid=93
[20] The Apac e-Society programme aimed to improve service delivery and community participation by promoting collaboration between civil society, private sector and local government through the use of ICTs to share their development plans, budgets and work plans, as well as to provide development information to communities.
[21] Supported by various donor agencies such as IICD and the EU, eKasese created online and physical platforms aimed at increasing transparency in the Kasese district local government
[22] DistrictNet supported the decentralisation programmes in four Ugandan districts through the use of ICT. It was designed to as an e-government programme at local level aimed to enable efficient, transparent and accountable local governance.

Table 1: RCDF Project Status as at 1st July 2010 (Source: UCC)

Programme Area	Description	Total number of projects			
		Commissioned by end 2009/10	Under Installation brought forward from 2009/10	Planned for 2010/11	Expected total by end 2010/11
Internet Point of Presence (POP)	Wireless connectivity network in 5-10km radius around the POP at costs, speeds and types of services comparable to those in the capital city - Kampala.	76	0	0	76
IInternet Cafes	Public access (up to 5 computers) to the internet and training services in each district.	63	43	0	0
ICT Training Centres		67	1	10	78
Multi-Purpose Community Telecentres (MCTs)	ICT training centres and internet cafes with additional services; video training programmes and rural business model demonstrations.	13	0	0	13
Public Pay Phones	Initiation and termination of calls	2,749	600	750	4,099
District Web Portals	Providing district information on, health, agriculture, education, government and politics, investment and trade, tourism, government programmes, environment, SMS services, infrastructure, news and district leader profiles as well as their contacts.	78	0	0	78
Postal Tele-Centres & post office expansion	Post offices at the sub county level and postal Tele-Centres at district post offices	45	0	0	45
School ICT Labs	In collaboration with the ministry of education and sports, Increase access and usage of ICT in government secondary schools.	208	340	160	708
Health ICT Facilities	In conjunction with the Ministry of Health, enhance the usage of ICT in health service. delivery.	43	131	0	174
GSM Expansion	Expansion of voice networks to previously uncovered sub counties	90	0	0	90
Content distribution support	Expansion of voice networks to previously uncovered sub counties	1	105	0	106
Governance enhancement programmes for Local Governments	Supply of computer equipment to each Resident District Commissioner's office (RDC) and each member of parliament to enhance their capacity in overseeing and monitoring public programmes in the district.	1	116	339	456
Unique Projects i.e. Adv Tele-Medicine, Post Code, and Broad Band		1	5	0	6
Total		3,435	1,231	1,369	6,035

2. METHODOLOGY

Various methods were employed in executing this research. These included desk research and review of literature on the role of ICT in enhancing democratic governance, data on ICT usage in Uganda, and the performance of projects in Uganda that have used ICT to improve the performance of local governments. This was followed up with visits to three community-based projects that piloted the use of ICT in enhancing citizen participation and improving service delivery. Interviews were conducted with those who managed these centres. Additionally, we conducted focus group discussions (FGDs) involving a total of 17 individuals. These discussions drew participants from diverse social, professional, and demographic backgrounds, and were held in three of four regions of Uganda.

Furthermore, a semi-structured questionnaire was administered to purposively selected respondents, mainly face to face. Where this was not possible or advantageous, online interviews were done. Some 25 experts or representatives of organisations engaged in promoting good governance and democracy monitoring, with a component of ICT, were interviewed. (Please refer to annex 2 for a listing of the interviewees and the organisations they represented.)

The questionnaire consisted of 16 open-ended, closed and multiple choice questions covering aspects such as ICT based tools usage, tools' satisfaction, the tools' estimated reach, confidence in utilising the tools, and drivers of success and non-success of the tools. Responses were coded and entered into a spreadsheet. The statistical figures were calculated and rounded off to the nearest whole number. Responses to open-ended questions were not directly reported but were drawn on for trend explanations, as well as for analysis.

In addition, audits and tests were conducted on some ICT tools which Ugandan entities were using, to ascertain their ease of use, services offered, usage levels, and downsides. For online portals, content and usability analyses were conducted to generate first-hand information on what they enabled and how well they did. To determine how and what the tools enabled, a qualitative content analysis was done. Assessment of accuracy of information, ease of use, topicality, and interactivity from a usability perspective, was conducted based on the Quality Framework for UK Government Websites Design and the Uganda Government Website Standards (see annex 1). Whereas these two frameworks are mainly applicable for websites/portals, it was considered that online based tools such as Facebook, blogs and twitter, which had mainly generic settings, could be gainfully analysed using the criteria 'Amount, variety and quality of content', 'Interactivity', and 'Responsiveness', which are found in both the Ugandan and UK Frameworks. For mobile phone based menu-systems, the interface was taken as a 'web page' and additional criteria namely 'Navigation', 'Organisation and layout', 'Download', 'Access' and 'Display' were deemed applicable.

Issued in 2007, the UK guidelines provided a means of benchmarking against Uganda's own website standards. The Ugandan standards, also issued in 2007, are for the most part not formally enforced. Implementers often rely on broad and unspecified formats and international standards to determine the accessibility of web based ICT tools (Baguma et al 2007). Baguma et al argue that the eventual websites, inaccessible to many potential users are a result of developers not being aware of the existence of numerous tools available for developing accessible websites.

Based on the 24 ICT tools assessed, seven main categories of uses of tools were identified:
- Information provision
- Election monitoring
- Lobbying and activism
- Voter registration
- Elections reporting
- Citizen policing
- Civic participation: Post Elections

The initiatives from each category were analysed separately in order to identify which ICT tools and approaches were dominant and seemed effective in each context.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Tools used to encourage citizens' participation

Various ICT based tools were in use, with three more common (Table 1). Amongst the more traditional media, print media was the most popular at 77% closely followed by radio. Social media such as wikis, blogs, Facebook and twitter were used by 68% of the organisations surveyed, and were thus seen as adding to the effectiveness of the internet as an enabler for civic participation and democracy monitoring. Email usage was reported by 77% of respondents.

Table 2: Platform and medium distribution of tools used (n=22)		
Platform	**Medium**	**Percentage Use**
Internet	Social Media	68%
	Web Portals	50%
	eForums	41%
	eNewsletters	59%
	Email	77%
	Discussion groups	50%
Media	Print	77%
	Television	50%
	Radio	68%
Mobile	SMS campaigns	68%
	Automated calls	5%

Respondent organisations used more than one tool. Three quarters of the organisations sampled used two or more internet based mediums (figure 1) and an almost equal number used all three media based tools in their engagement with citizens (figure 2). The explanation given for this was that it allowed for engagement in a time-sensitive nature in addition to accessing population factions excluded by one of the other tools.

Figure 1: The collective use of internet based tools (n=22)
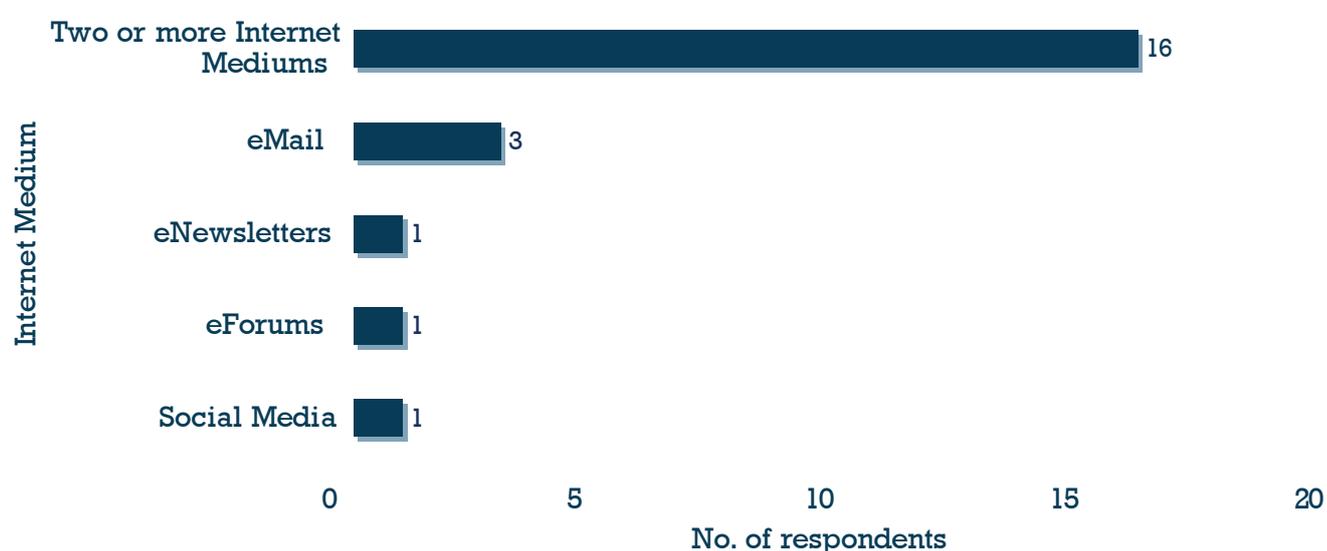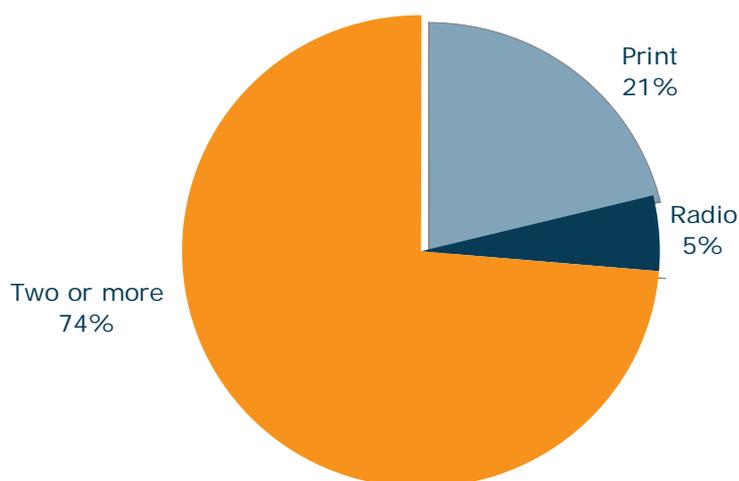
Figure 1: The collective use of internet based tools (n=22)

It is noteworthy that whereas print only reaches a small fraction of Ugandans (daily circulation of newspapers is about 110,000 copies), the surveyed organisations who were leaders in using ICT in promoting participation, still were heavily reliant on print media. Arguably, even when they combined print with SMS or social media, most of the populations they reached were information-rich Ugandans, with limited reach to the rural information poor with low income and literacy levels.

3.2 What participation do the tools enable?

The tools studied enabled a range of participation activities, as outlined below, with a discussion on how each of them worked.

Information provision

ICT tools can empower and inform citizens to make independent choices, build their capacity and confidence to participate in democratic processes. In the run up to Uganda's February 2011 presidential elections, ICT provided alternative mediums of communication and engagement, where citizens could express views that might otherwise not have been tolerated if they were to voice them through mainstream media. Where print and programmed broadcasting could not allow for live reporting, media houses made up for this in numerous ways. The Daily Monitor newspaper's online portal incorporated live Twitter and breaking news for numerous social and political events, while its sister company, Nation Television (NTV), made use of Youtube to upload latest videos.[26] This provided users with extensive footage, which in formal televised broadcasts such as routine news bulletins was often heavily edited.

More than ever, media houses during 2010 and 2011 asked their readers, viewers and listeners to participate actively in call-in programmes, comments on Facebook pages and Twitter updates. All of these supplemented print content which often was summarised and carefully edited. On television, during the February election campaigns, the Uganda National NGO Forum run a 'Face the Citizens' show aimed at providing an interactive forum for Ugandans to engage with political candidates on accountability and key issues in the run-up to the elections. Participants phoned into the lives debates and SMSed, emailed, tweeted and posted via Facebook, their opinions and questions. In addition, the NGO Forum launched the 'Citizen's Manifesto' which detailed information about key issues citizens needed candidates to tackle once elected into office. The manifesto was promoted on numerous radio talk shows and during the 'Face the Citizens' TV debates.

Furthermore, the Electoral Commission and other Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) made use of SMS, radio and TV to sensitise and create awareness about the voting process as discussed in the next sub-sections.

Election monitoring

Crowd sourcing and crowd mapping technology offered a new way for citizens to monitor various stages of the election process. In monitoring elections, two initiatives, Uchaguzi and Uganda Watch 2011, allowed for information and events to be reported as they happened. Combined with other tools such as SMS short codes, online forms, email and Twitter, the platforms supported fair and transparent elections in real-time. Below are some of the initiatives that were used:

[26] http://www.youtube.com/user/ntvuganda

Uchaguzi[27], run by the Citizens Coalition for Electoral Democracy in Uganda (CCEDU) and other civil society organisations,[28] aggregated "citizens' and election observers' voices in near real time" on the elections, incorporating mobile phones, mapping tools, twitter and Facebook on its online portal.

Figure 3: Uchaguzi electoral monitoring web portal
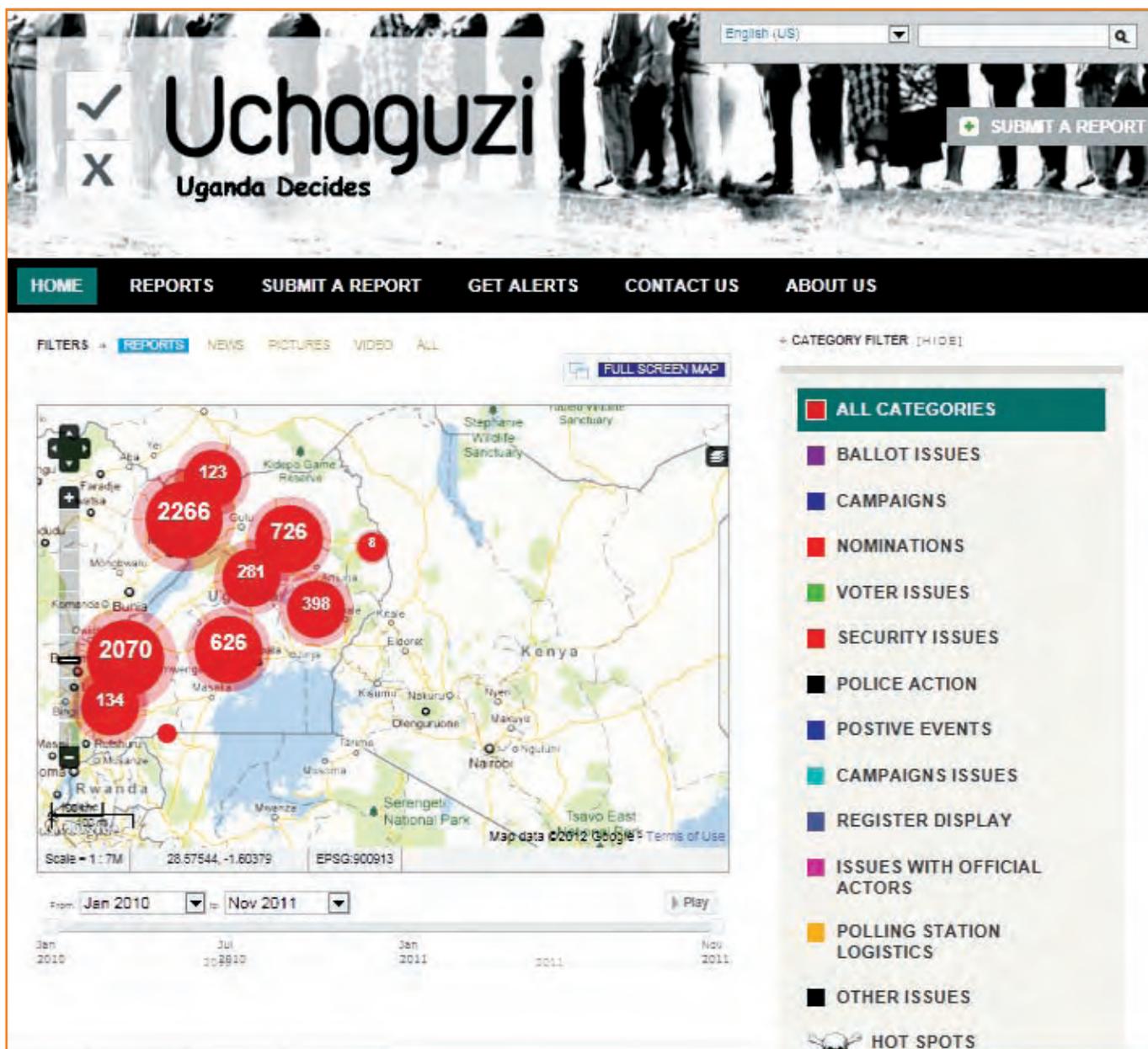
Various participatory activities were enabled. For instance, citizens could subscribe for alerts sent directly to their email addresses. As part of the subscription process, one could state (or pinpoint on a map) the location and subject category of the desired alerts. As for report submissions by citizens or participating CSOs, four options were available: an online form, sending a message to an SMS short code[29], sending an email, or tweeting with hashtags.[30] The reports were either submitted anonymously or the user could opt to submit their name and contact information. The sourced information was first verified by phone calls to the incident reporter and through locally based observers and organisations before being uploaded on the website. The information, using Ushahidi's open source collection, visualisation and interactive mapping software was collated and compiled by CCEDU and CEW-IT (see below) and visualised on a map. The report categories included ballot issues, voter bribery, voter register irregularities, security issues, police action, and polling station logistics. Unverified reports were published as 'unverified'.

Table 3: Day two of Vote count, Uchaguzi statistics (Source: CEWIT, Uchaguzi Uganda)[31]

Total Reports	Processed Reports	Verified	Reports by Category	
			Category	**No. of incidents**
			Everything is fine at the polling station	1,273
			Voting Exercise	400
			Other issues	291
5,816	3,296	59.09%	Polling station not opened on time	285
			Campaigns	197
			Polling Results	189
			Peace efforts	178
			Peaceful Campaigns	107
			Campaigns beyond official time	86

Uganda Watch 2011,[32] was a citizen-oriented online hotline similar to Uchaguzi, which encouraged citizens to report problems encountered in the electoral process. This system was run by the Democracy Monitoring Group (DEMGroup)[33] and CCEDU. The platform also crowd sourced election information from citizens via an SMS short code and an online form. Categories of reports on its portal ranged from complaints about imbalanced journalism, questions and complaints about the electoral process, election-related incidents, voter bribery, violence, intimidation, and violations of electoral laws and regulations.

Citizen Election Watch IT (CEWIT)[34] meanwhile, stated its objective as to provide a platform through which citizens were "empowered and equipped to engage on issues of development, democratic governance and to effectively carry out their constitutional and national obligations and responsibilities for productive democratic development, national stability and quality livelihoods rich with balanced socio-political and economic society of transformed men and women of Uganda." CEWIT was active in both the Uchaguzi and Uganda Watch 2011 initiatives. Through its member organisations, CEWIT advocated for citizen participation during the electoral process and shared information. Through research reports and press releases published on its online portal, CEWIT created awareness and motivated citizens to act on information provided in holding duty bearers accountable.[35]

One of the challenges faced by these crowd sourcing platforms was the inability to fully process and verify the accuracy and reliability of some of the data sent to them. Over two days, Uchaguzi processed less than 60% of reports (see table 3 above). There was also limited ability to take action on incidents reported, beyond possibly forwarding them to relevant authorities. We found no evidence on the portals of follow-up action, such as the results of investigations by the police into reports of violence or by the Electoral Commission into electoral malpractices. Uganda Watch 2011 claimed it followed up by forwarding reported problems to the relevant stakeholders such as the Electoral Commission and Police but nothing further was reported. Indeed, the crowd sourcing platforms did not make public the specific procedures they followed in forwarding reports to the authorities or the actions taken by the authorities in addressing incidents.

Similar to virtually all other tools, English was the sole interface language. Although Uchaguzi had French as its second language, he two languages provide for a limited audience in Uganda. For Uchaguzi and Uganda Watch 2010, sourced alerts initially sent in local languages were translated into English before being uploaded, which in some ways appeared to defeat the purpose for having local language submissions in the first place.

Meanwhile, the SMS short codes for crowd sourcing were not free. For instance, a message to Uganda Watch 2010's code 6090 was charged at UGX100 per text. The average cost of an on-network text message on Uganda telecom operators is UGX50. At double that price, Uganda Watch's 2010 short code could have proved a disincentive for citizen participation.

Additionally, access to these tools in rural areas was limited by low levels of literacy and connectivity limitations. And after the elections, these tools remained under-utilised. As of December 15, 2011, Uchaguzi has had one new report – an accusation of a biased judge – since March 2011. Uganda Watch had no new reports since May 2011. There is potential for these platforms to be used for other democratic processes such as local government budgetary expenditures tracking, or citizens' monitoring of public services delivery in such sectors as health and education.

Lobbying & Activism

Social media has been widely used as a platform for protest action in Uganda, mainly by activist groups. The following are some of the initiatives that heavily relied on these tools for communication and mobilisation for civic activism:

[31] CEW-IT, State of the Nation Report http://cewit.or.ug/wp-content/uploads/Day-Two-Vote-Count-UGANDA.pdf
[32] www.ugandawatch.org
[33] www.demgroup.org
[34] http://cewit.or.ug/
[35] http://cewit.or.ug/press-release/

Activists for Change (A4C)[36] is a consortium of politicians and CSOs that sought to "effect democratic change of government through mobilising the masses and setting in motion a process to remove obstacles to free and fair elections by peacefully dismantling the pillars of the authoritarian regime in Uganda and erecting the pillars of democratic rule". The group operated a Facebook group with over 5,000 followers.[37] Members could write and comment on issues, upload content and comment on each other's submissions. From April 2011, A4C run the 'Walk-to-Work' and 'Hoot for Change' campaigns, which mobilised citizens to walk and hoot in protest against government's apparent inaction on spiralling food and fuel prices. The protests were met by an uncompromising crackdown from security agencies, leaving hundreds in prison and more than a dozen dead.

Figure 4: A4C blog

The A4C pressure group also maintained a blog where citizens contributed to posts and debates through the comment facility of blogger. Through Facebook and Tweeter, the posts could be shared with the reader's friends/followers via the 'Share it' links on the blog.

Apparently, due to the success of the social media in mobilising supporters for A4C, the regulator – Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) – at some stage ordered all local Internet Service Providers to cut access to Facebook and Twitter for 24 hours. It said the move was intended ""to eliminate the connection and sharing of information that incites the public"[38].

The A4C mobilising for protests was also reported on a web portal. Citizens could subscribe for email alerts and newsletters. On the 'A4C in the media' section of the website, a list of external media links related to the campaign was posted. Besides participating in protests, citizens were able to further A4C's cause by making donations through Paypal.

On Twitter, with hashtag #walk2work, A4C had fewer than 100 followers. Between April 2011 and early June 2011, it had tweeted only 74 times, which was perhaps telling about Twitter's popularity in Uganda relative to Facebook where the group had 5,200 fans.

Honour Your Vote was another campaign initiated on December 4, 2010 by CCEDU, urging Ugandans not to accept bribes in exchange for their votes.[39] The campaign included activities like interactive radio and TV programmes which included daily voters' tips on voting. The campaign operated a Facebook page which attracted 619 'likes'. Beyond the election period, the campaign maintained a website which was not updated.

The Return Our Money Campaign was initiated after Government had, in the heat of the presidential and parliamentary campaigns, transferred about US$10,000 to the accounts of each Member of Parliament, ostensibly to enable them to monitor government programmes. The campaign's Facebook members' page provided followers with updates on government expenditures. Post submissions and other information were open and members interacted through Facebook's comment facility. In addition, a full list of contact details for Members of Parliament was available. With more than 500 members, the page also linked to other activist groups and pages.[40]

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[36] http://activists4change.blogspot.com/   [37] www.facebook.com/groups/activists4change/?ref=ts

[38] BBC, African Jitters over Blogs and Social Media, June 2011 http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13786143

[39] www.honouryourvote.ug/   [40] http://activists4change.blogspot.com/

Ugandans at Heart operated a blog where members wrote and provided updates on topical issues affecting Ugandans.[41] An invitation only Google-run discussion group supplemented the blog.[42] The Google group had 10,212 members as of May 2011. In addition, the group engaged journalists by requesting them to host their links on newspaper websites.

However, it was difficult to measure the impact of these social media tools on the various initiatives. Numbers of followers or members could not directly reflect the number of citizens that actually took part in the campaigns, or of those who received messages from them, or were influenced by these campaigns. Again, English remained the main, and almost exclusive, language of communication in these tools, which could have hampered their reach and utility.

Voter registration

The Online Voters Register and SMS platform : The Electoral Commission of Uganda enabled voters to undertake a range of actions via internet or mobile.[43] The system was intended to improve public service provision by easing the voter registration process and management of voters' information.[44] Through the National Voters' Register (NRV) online platform, citizens were able to log in and verify their voting details – polling station, correct names and also identify 'ghost' voters.[45]

Towards election dates, voters were provided with an SMS platform where they could verify their voting details. An SMS short code accessible across all mobile networks allowed voters through their voter-ID number to verify the polling station, parish and sub-parish where they had registered to vote. To educate voters, SMS were sent out to phone subscribers urging them to verify their details: "Confirm your polling station for the upcoming elections. Send your voter ID number or 17 digit handwritten number on your receipt to 8683 for free." The user would then TYPE 1234567 and SEND TO (short code number).[46]
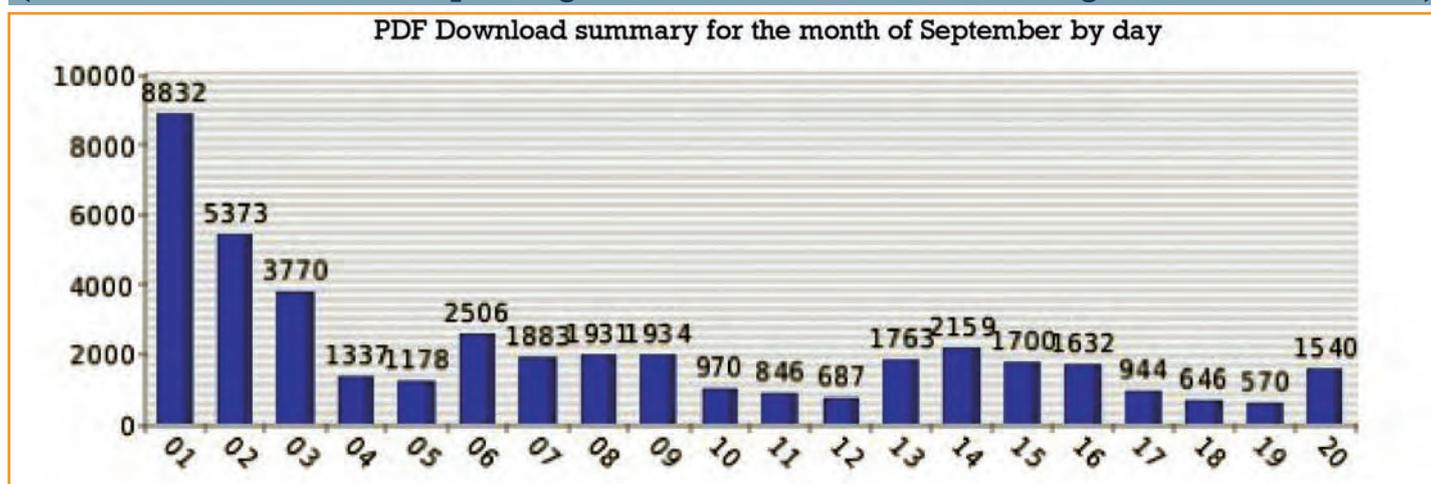
More publicity about the SMS initiative was run through radio announcements and SMS campaigns. This service gave a chance to those voters who had no internet access to verify their voting location. The SMS system reportedly increased voter participation as it saved citizens time of going to wrong polling stations.

However, the service enabled little interactivity besides providing the public access to information. It was not clear how deaths, changes of address, and 'ghost' voter reports were handled. Neither the SMS nor online platform run by the electoral body allowed citizens to suggest updates to incomplete, inaccurate, or out of date information or to make comments online about the accuracy of their or other people's voting information.

Furthermore, privacy and security were overlooked. The NVR listed individuals' full names, date of birth and their local polling stations, enabling anybody who went online to access all the private information of any voter.

According to an IFES report on the National Online Voter Register, in its launch month, access to the NVR started off in the thousands but over the next days dwindled to just over 500 daily visits.[47]

Figure 5: Uganda National Online Voter Register PDF downloads per day (Source: 2010 Installation Report, Uganda National Online Voters Register; eLAAB Limited)

[41] http://ugandansatheart.org/

[42] http://groups.google.com/group/ugandans-at-heart/topics?pli=1

[43] www.ec.or.ug

[44] IFES November 2011; Now Online! Uganda's Voter Register www.ifes.org/Content/Publications/Opinions/2010/Nov/Now-Online-Ugandas-Voter-Register.aspx

[45] www.nvr.or.ug

[46] IFES February 2011; New Media Technology Debuts in Uganda Election , http://www.ifes.org/Content/Publications/Articles/2011/New-Media-Technology-Debuts-in-Uganda-Election.aspx

[47] IFES 2010: Installation Report, Uganda National Online Voters Register. eLAAB Limited. September 21, 2010.

It was not clear if these were unique or repeat visitors. Nonetheless, the decreasing trend was indicative with regard to the Electoral Commission's publicity of the NVR for one. After its launch in September 2010, the media campaign by the EC declined. Besides, given that there were about 14 million voters on the Register, for 1,000 visitors to access it on any given day shows its under-utilisation. However, according to IFES, the NVR of approximately 98,000 polling stations were viewed/ downloaded followed by over 51,000 polling lists, in September 2010. Individual voter searches registered about 2,000 hits in August. However, the number of searches went down to about 700 in September following the end of the Register display period.

Results reporting and votes tallying

The Electoral Commission's Electronic Results Transmission and Dissemination System (ERTDS) was used to tally results at the districts, then transmit them to the National Tally Centre where the same system was used for adding up the results. This service provided the tally centre with quick access to results from all districts in the country. Once the Commission staff had cleared the tally results coming in, the figures were relayed to stakeholders (media, political parties, and observers), thus increasing transparency in election monitoring.

The National Democratic Institute (NDI), meanwhile ran a Parallel Vote Tabulations (PVT) system to provide independent vote counts alongside the Electoral Commission.[48] The system was incorporated into Uganda Watch 2011 (See election monitoring section above).

During the elections, the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) opposition party set up its own tally centre. Its results were released nearly two weeks after the official declaration of the election results. However, the results only accounted for a small number of polling stations.[49] The opposition party alleged that the phone company MTN had sabotaged its tally centre by jamming the telephone lines of its polling station agents, thereby making it impossible for them to transmit results. The party called for a boycott of MTN services.[50] MTN has the biggest number of subscribers of all operators in Uganda.

Citizen Policing

Ureport, a UNICEF-led initiative, is a free SMS social monitoring tool designed to address issues affecting the youth of Uganda. The system allows young people to speak out on what is happening in their communities, provides a forum to amplify their voices through local and national media, and feeds back useful information to help Ureporters to use in their initiative, enact change and mobilise communities. Through use of free SMS, the system allows users to send questions out to Ureporters using a short code and Ureporters respond allowing information to be collected instantaneously. Piloted in September 2010, Ureport initially had 100 scouts, growing to over 800 reporters across 60 districts. Poll questions and information are sent out to registered Ureporters on a weekly basis. The Ureporters in turn send unsolicited information to the system.[51]

Currently focusing on water, sanitation and access to education, in the future Ureport hopes to cover broader issues affecting the youth of Uganda. This initiative empowers youth to make a difference and improve their rights and improve lives in their communities. Since the results of Ureports are shared among decision makers and other stakeholders who implement change, the initiative could potentially strengthen social monitoring and citizenship education.

Civic Participation: Post Elections

With ICT proving to be worthwhile tools during elections, more initiatives are embracing technology to promote good governance and democracy monitoring. These initiatives are supporting the collaboration and active engagement of citizens and their leaders.

The Parliamentary Call System (PCS)[52] is an online platform being developed by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) in partnership with the Parliament of Uganda and Columbia University. Piloted in four constituencies in Uganda between August and September 2010, it is a tool that aims to facilitate communication between MPs and constituents. It allows constituents to send messages to their MP through SMS or voice messages. The messages are then entered into a case management system, UsPeak, which the MP can access in order to read and respond to these messages. MPs can use the system to record the actions they take to address constituents' messages.

UsPeak generates a host of aggregated information useful to MPs, constituents and researchers. It tracks the issues most reported by constituents by date and location, types of communication from constituents (such as requests for information, actions or opinions), types of opinions and legislators' responses to messages. Essentially, the system stands to promote transparency and accountability through enhanced communication between constituents and their MPs and highlighting the 'big picture' through aggregation and representation of information.[53]

[48] http://www.ndi.org/NDI_Organizes_Parallel_Vote_Tabulation_Academy

[49] The Independent, Besigye Ahead of Museveni in FDC tally centre results, March 1, 2011. http://www.independent.co.ug/ugandatalks/2011/03/besigye-ahead-of-museveni-in-fdc-tally-centre-results/

[50] Uganda Opposition Calls for MTN Boycott, March 2011. http://telecomafrica.blogspot.com/2011/03/ugandas-opposition-calls-for-mtn.html
About uReport, http://ureport.ug/about_ureport/

[51] http://www.ndi.org/uganda

[53] Columbia University, Report on the Pilot of the Ugandan Parliamentary Call System. Available at http://guygrossman.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Columbia-PCS-Pilot-Report-FINAL.pdf

The system was set to be tested in a bigger number of constituencies in 2011. With a low pilot uptake (6% citizens users and 11% MP replies), once deployed, it remains to be seen whether the PCS could break the rural-urban technical skills, cost price, level of education and sex barriers among constituents as highlighted in the Pilot regions. Additionally, the pilot report found that for MPs participation, time, incentives and training issues arose relative to them contacting constituents via traditional channels.

Another parliamentary initiative is the **Africa4All project**.[54] Targeted to benefit five African countries including Uganda, the project leveraged on web 2.0 technologies to support collaboration and active engagement of MPs and citizens in the decision-making process. The stated features of registered platform users included, among others:

- Member directory listing profiles of registered users;
- A group tool for members to create or join their own groups for the distribution and archiving of messages;
- Discussion forums;
- An open space – 'My Agora' – for user management of participative processes on policies and action plans. Associated links, documents and forums are listed. Also included are questionnaires and calendar events.
- Petitioning
- Letter to officials
- Online newsletter if the parliament wants to publish periodic newsletters about their activities.

Although its implementation was reported to be well underway in the participating country parliaments, it was not clear what the scale was and what impact Africa4All had actually created in Uganda.[55]

3.3 Reach of the tools

Interestingly, the tools run by the organisations sampled, even with the potential for near national reach, were barely reaching one tenth of Ugandans. Some organisations were modest and declared uncertainty over the number of citizens or geographical reach of their tools. Only about one tenth of the organisations reported that their tools had a countrywide reach.

Table 4: Distribution of the approximate number of citizens reached/able to access tools (n=22)		
Number of citizens	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Less than 50,000	6	27%
50,000 – 1,000,000	6	27%
Over 1,000,000	2	9%
Countrywide	2	9%
Uncertain	3	14%
Other		
870 Households		
540 Member organisations	3	14%
3 Sub counties		
Total	22	100%

3.4. Use of ICT tools by organisations studied

Demand for better services, accountability, and transparency in the conduct of public affairs were the recurrent themes in the objectives of most organisations. Communication and consultation between citizens and leaders followed. Electronic services such as registration, volunteering, and donations, were only just emerging, which reflected the status of general e-services development in the country.

[54] Africa4All Parliamentary Initiative http://www.africa4all-project.eu/index.php
[55] Africa4All Parliamentary Initiative Press Release, July 2011. http://www.africa4all.net/images/stories/A4A_Press_Release_13072011.pdf

Table 5: Purpose of the tools in order of popularity

Purpose	% of respondents (n=22)
Demand accountability and transparency in the conduct of public affairs	73
Encourage citizens to demand for better services	73
Allow communication between/ among citizens, leaders and interest groups	68
Consult citizens on political or public issues	64
Follow-up on political debates and decisions	64
Electoral monitoring	64
Enable citizens' participation in debates	59
Civic education	55
Voter registration/ education	41
Promote youth political awareness	36
Offer e-services to citizens (e.g. administration (download forms, registration etc.)	23

3.5 How political parties used ICT in the 2011 elections

Political parties used ICT in various ways during the elections. These ranged from automated calls, use of social media, SMS, and fairly versatile websites.

Party campaigning

All political parties used ICT in their campaigns for the 2011 elections, mainly party websites. Table 6 below details the content analysis and ranking score for each of the websites. All party websites were simple, easy to navigate, informative, relevant, and were regularly updated. In most cases, citizens were able to find the party's manifesto and download speeches. The content on the websites was available without subscription. Besides, the websites incorporated links to each party's other tools, such as blogs, Facebook, Twitter, Flicker and Youtube.

Users could perform the basic functions such as print, search, download documents, read news, and make contact/provide feedback. However, for citizens the participation possible on the websites was often limited to signing up for email and mobile news updates.

It was hard to tell whether citizens visiting these websites achieved their intended objectives more effectively and efficiently online as opposed to physically attending campaign rallies, watching TV news, listening to radio, or phoning up party headquarters. This was because information was provided intermittently and the extent of participative activities offline exceeded those online.

Furthermore, none of the websites' designs covered disabled citizens' access. The vision-impaired were thus often excluded by colour schemes and text size. Plus, English was the language used, thereby locking out the large proportion of Ugandans who did not understand this language.

From Table 6 below, on interactivity from whence civic participation would ideally stem, there was little flexible options for citizens to engage in civic matters. The choice in when, what, and where to participate in campaigns was restricted to news alert subscriptions and donations. The political party websites should have incorporated in their design discussion groups and signed-in user areas. While some of the sites had a 'volunteer' link, it was not stated what one could volunteer for, or whether it would be for online or offline activities.

Table 6: June 2011 Content analysis of Political Party websites

Criteria 1: Amount, Variety and Quality of Content

Ranking	Bold Text	Bullets	Tables	Charts/Graphs	Use of existing offline documents	RSS feed/ breaking news page	Site map	Comments
1. DP[56]	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	• Party Youtube Channel built into the website • Online poll available • Downloadable posters, banners and desktop background images
2. NRM[57]	√	√	√	X	√	√	X	• Some dead external links
3. FDC	√	√	√	√	√	X	X	• Press releases available
4. PPP	√	√	X	X	√	√	X	• Dead internal links or redirect to wrong pages • Logged in member area available
5. UFA	√	√	X	X	√	√	X	• Speech PDF downloads
6. UPC[58]	√	√	X	X	√	X	X	• Content appears simply copied and pasted from existing offline documents • Some external links – not directly related to the party and its campaign • Notice board page for announcements

Criteria 2: Interactivity

Ranking	Subscription	Personalisation	Comments
1. FDC	√	X	• Citizens are able to sign up to a mailing list, sign up as volunteers and also join the political party. • Online donations via Paypal using Visa, MasterCard and American Express possible. For offline donations, account details for banks in Uganda, United Kingdom, Germany and the United States were available. Also possible in Uganda was donations via the mobile money transfer service of three mobile telephone networks.
2. DP	√	X	• Citizens are able to sign up to a mailing list, sign up as volunteers and also join the political party. • Online donations via Paypal using Visa, MasterCard and American Express possible. Offline, donations were possible via the mobile money transfer service of two telephone networks.
3. UFA	√	X	• Online donations via Paypal, using Visa, MasterCard and American Express possible. United States and Uganda bank account details, as well on one mobile money transfer number are listed for offline donations. • Email and phone alert subscriptions
4. PPP	√	√	• Registration allows member log-in and specific user area. • Donation links (dead) • Email subscriptions enabled
5. NRM	√	X	• 'I am for NRM' – signing up for email and mobile updates.
6. UPC	X	X	• Account details for a Uganda held account available for offline donations.

[57] http://www.democraticparty.ug/   [58] http://www.nrm.ug/   [58] http://www.upcparty.net/

Table 6: June 2011 Content analysis of Political Party websites

Criteria 3: Responsiveness

Ranking	FAQ	Feedback (email or form)	Contact details	Indication of response times	Comments
1. DP	√	√	√	X	• None of the websites has an indication of response times to queries (days or hours) • The lack of a FAQ sections for some sites undermines the idea of basic information at a glance and there are no immediate answers to common queries that citizens might have.
2. UFA	√	√	√	X	
3. NRM	X	√	√	X	
4. FDC	X	√	√	X	
5. UPC	X	X	√	X	• Feedback is done away from the website – via email
6. PPP	X	X	X	X	

Criteria 4: Navigation, Organisation and Layout

Ranking	Search Facility	Navigation options on home page	Comments
1. NRM	√	√	• All have clear information hierarchy. 'Latest news', 'Election results', 'Current news', 'media links' and 'Issues' feature on the homepage. Indeed important information appears in clear section headings. • DP and UFA have 'Ask the president' question submission • Searches/query returns are not ordered in any indicative order – date or relevance to search words.
2. DP	√	√	
3. PPP	√	√	
4. FDC	X	√	
5. UFA	X	√	
6. UPC	X	X	• The navigation options are fixed on all sections of the website and appear only by left hand side of the page.

Table 6: June 2011 Content analysis of Political Party websites

Criteria 5: Download, access and display

	Images	Animation	Downloadable content	Browser compatibility	Comments
NRM	√	√	√	√	In terms of size and use of images, all the websites are fully optimised. None of them made use of unnecessary animations or media. Documents are available to view online with the option for users to download and save them for future offline access.

Screen size settings, different browsers and computer platforms were considered. The websites are accessible from commonly used web and mobile phone browsers [Internet Explorer, Mozzilla, Firefox, Safari and Google Chrome] running on Windows, Linux and Macintosh operating systems. |
FDC	√	√	√	√	
DP	√	√	√	√	
UPC	√	X	√	√	
PPP	√	√	√	√	
UFA	√	√	√	√	

On Facebook, political parties also maintained accounts for the political party itself as well as the party leader's fan pages. Neither pages had access restrictions; supporters were free to join and comment/participate in debates posted on the Facebook wall and discussion sections. Party photos and videos were also posted for group members'/fans viewing. Facebook had no document upload or download facility, press releases, speeches and other information pertaining to the party's campaign run in the 'Notes' section where group members interacted with each other and got some responses to queries raised. 'Events' and 'Updates' pages are available. With no provisions for anonymity, individual citizen participation was directly linked to a Facebook account name and the respective holder was easily identifiable. For fear of persecution, this was perhaps a deterrent to participation.

Table 7: Political Party campaign use of social media as at 20th May 2011

Political Party	Facebook	Twitter	Flicker	Youtube Channel	Podcasting	Blogs
NRM[59]	5869 likes	Active since November 2010 10 Tweets 307 followers Last tweet December 2010	Photo galleries and albums from from rallies and events	Active since October 2010 1,565 Channel views 56,669 Upload views 18 Subscribers Last updated December 2010	X	X
FDC[60]	4313 likes	226 Tweets 159 followers Weekly tweets	X	X	X	45 posts (Nov & Dec 2010) 16 posts Jan. 2011
DP[61]	18031 likes	764 Tweets 666 followers Daily updates	X	X	X	3 posts (April & May 2011)
UPC[62]	1,898 friends	X	X	X	X	X
PPP	X	X	X	X	X	X
UFA[63]	1,626 members	X	X	X	X	X

With all the above tools employed, party campaigns via online tools remained limited in reach. The nature of the tools, layout, design, and content restrictions applied all played a role. Tweets are restricted to 140 character lengths; Flicker is an images and video only hosting site; and YouTube is a video sharing website. In all, information and content made available was limited and frequency of activity and the tools' vibrancy seemed to have fizzled out post-elections.

[59] See: http://www.facebook.com/pages/Yoweri-Kaguta-Museveni-Fan-Page/159462120759043; http://twitter.com/#!/ykmuseveni; http://www.flickr.com/photos/55160505@N07/; http://www.youtube.com/user/MuseveniYoweri?feature=mhum

[60] See; http://www.facebook.com/pages/Forum-For-Democratic-Change/221544635524?ref=ts%20 ; https://twitter.com/#!/FDCUganda; http://besigyepressblog.blogspot.com/

[61] See; http://www.facebook.com/pages/Norbert-Mao/89143559143?ref=ts; http://twitter.com/#!/norbertmao; http://www.norbertmao.org/blog/ 62http://www.ndi.org/uganda

[62] http://www.facebook.com/pages/Uganda-Peoples-Congress/111078308942513

[63] http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=74521112873

Innovative Campaign tools

Automated calls: Pre-recorded messages in multiple languages, seeking mobile subscribers' votes were sent out via an automated call system by the NRM candidate and incumbent President Museveni. "Hullo, I greet you. Thank you for your support. As you go to vote, please vote for Museveni, the man in a hat." thus went the message. After the elections, many voters received an automated call with Museveni's pre-recorded voice thanking them for voting him. In the focus group discussions, we were told of voters who felt honoured that the president could call them – many believing that the president had actually called them – and therefore voted for him.

SMS: Millions of Ugandan mobile phone subscribers received a text message with greetings in local languages from candidates, mainly Museveni. The text messages solicited for votes. After the elections victory, the NRM campaign sent a message thanking voters.

Music and Video: Following a campaign speech, the NRM candidate recorded a rap song You Want Another Rap complete with remixes and back-up vocals. The rap video was uploaded on Youtube[64] and it went viral particularly among the Ugandan online community, also gaining popularity as a ringtone, caller tune, and un-official party anthem.

Fundraising

Supporters of the political parties FDC and DP were able to make donations online through renowned international banking systems (VISA Paypal, Mastercard and American Express). For donors unable to undertake internet banking transactions, physical bank account details were made available for both local and international banks. With the advent of money transfer through telecom companies in Uganda, the parties' subscriber numbers on the three major mobile money transfer providers were made available on their websites. FDC promised transparency in the way donations would be spent: "Our campaign office will be regularly announcing how much we have received from supporters, and what we are using the money for. The money is a sign of commitment and sacrifice to the change we desire. We thank you most sincerely for your contributions."

3.6. Perceptions on how usage of tools affects participation and governance

Over 70% of organisations surveyed felt that their interventions affected participation for the better. But some felt that the effect of ICT on participation was not easy to quantify, hence 15% admitted to not knowing what effect the tools they implemented had created.

Most respondents felt that ICT were vital tools in providing citizens with better access to unbiased information and participation on national issues. Respondents generally felt that given the right circumstances, these tools enabled information sharing and awareness creation through alternative mediums of communication where citizens' voices which may otherwise not have been tolerated, especially in mainstream media, got heard. Moreover, through ICT, citizens were also able to interact, not just with each other, but with their elected official, and had mechanisms for providing feedback to the relevant stakeholders.

Further, it was indicated that ICT was crucial for the work of many Ugandan civil society organisations and communities for intra-communication, networking, and reporting. In addition, useful debate on governance was being generated via ICT tools. As citizens reported and shared information through different ICT platforms, it was easier to keep track of latest developments in their communities.

Furthermore, the tools had created means for citizens to demand proper accountability and transparency from their leaders. As Robert Lugolobi, the Transparency International Uganda head, remarked: *"Citizens get to appreciate that they have a constitutional duty to safeguard public resources as stipulated in Article 17 (d) and (i) and also that they have a right to participate in government decision making processes as stipulated by objective X and XXVI of our constitution."* Objective X of the Constitution of Uganda stipulates that necessary steps should always be taken for citizens to play a role in the "formulation and implementation of development plans and programmes which affect them". Under Article 17 (d) and (i), citizens are duty bound to protect and preserve public property as well as fight corruption, misuse, and waste of public property. Meanwhile, Objective XXVI promotes accountability from leaders in public office.[65]

Government policies have been questioned and influenced by ICT based tools. When the Ministry of Finance announced a ban on second hand computers, members of I-Network,[66] an online discussion group, generated debate on the issue which saw the implementation of the proposed ban being delayed. Similarly, Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET)[67] often generated debate on gender-related bills by soliciting citizens to sign petitions which were then presented to parliament. A recent petition urged government to increase funding to the health sector so as to lower maternal deaths. It was not clear whether the government had acted on this petition but it was clear that ICT was being used as a crucial mobilising tool that could actually help to influence policy making.

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[64] President Yoweri Museveni rap OFFICIAL HD with Lyrics Do you want another rap ; http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XXe3uRL3gog
[65] Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, http://ugandaemb.org/Constitution_of_Uganda.pdf
[66] http://www.i-network.or.ug/
[67] www.wougnet.org

In citizen policing and crowd sourcing, ICT tools due to their capacity to enable real-time and timely citizen monitoring and participation in political and social affairs, had been used to highlight poor services offered by public service providers. For recent innovations such as Ureport and USpeak, it was unclear how successful the initiatives would be compared to the likes of Uchaguzi and Uganda Watch 2011. However, what it was certain that Ugandan citizens were now able to report on and interact with their leaders in a much more efficient, convenient, and often secure manner.

3.7. Challenges to uptake of ICT tools

From the numbers given by organisations of how many people they reached, it was evident that few Ugandans had embraced the tools. All surveyed organisations agreed that efforts to enhance civic participation through ICT were hindered by the low number of people reached. A major constraint mentioned by all organisations was funding shortages. This was followed by the high cost of accessing the tools, the capability to use (language and literacy) the mainly internet or mobile based platforms. Besides, due to limited publicity of the tools and the lack of feedback mechanisms, citizens were either unaware of the tools available or shunned using them for various reasons.

Table 8: Challenges and obstacles of the tools in order of highest mention

Challenges	% of respondents (n=22)
Limited funding for deployment	96
The digital divide (Inequality among citizens in access to and use of technology)	92
High cost of accessing/utilising the tools	92
Lack of citizens' involvement in development	76
Lack of awareness of the existence of these tools	76
Poor appreciation by citizens of the utility of these tools	56
Lack of/ inadequate govt. involvement	52
Minimal trust by elected representatives and government officials	52
Government and local administration's resistance to change	44
Citizens' distrust of the internet	36
Citizens resistance to change	20

4 DISCUSSION

A couple of issues emerged prominently as crucial for improving the utility and uptake of the tools we studied. Below, we highlight some of them:

Technology intractability: Most of the tools in use were internet based and thus required access to the internet. Literacy, language, availability, and cost, often limited affordability and use. It thus becomes imperative to combine ICT and non-ICT tools to have a larger number of citizens participate. Given that most citizens are not tech-savvy, it is important not to rely on sophisticated technologies, just as it is important to realise that the social media 'bandwagon effect' may not always be relevant or the most advantageous. Besides, given capacity limitations, it should make better sense to go for low bandwidth web portals.

It is also imperative to choose technologies which can attain optimum reach at low cost. A mix of technologies, channels and languages is good, and project implementers should be mindful of the literacy, income, gender, and linguistic dynamics in the society served. Thus, an overlap of online and offline engagements would work better in reaching out to diverse publics: for instance, radio programmes, flyers, bulk sms, community debates (face to face meetings) all complementing each other.

Moreover, for technology to work effectively, it has to be available when it is needed. Tools like Facebook, twitter, and YouTube, are available online for free, which partly explains their growing popularity in Uganda. However, some of these technologies require fast internet speeds, as well as enabling gadgets. Whereas an increasing number of Ugandans have access to and use the internet, access by the majority of the population is still low, hampered primarily by high costs.

Promote stakeholder sharing and awareness creation: It is useful to involve a diverse range of stakeholders in the planning, development and deployment of ICT tools. Government, civil society, users, and the private sector are often all useful to involve at the various stages of planning, testing, and implementing ICT solutions that aim to empower the community. Each is likely to bring a competence, yet support and buy-in are also critical to the success of what is being planned. As for users' involvement in deciding what

is needed and in the design and development of tools and platforms, it is evidently crucial to get their buy in as well as to assess and attend to their needs. This would in turn help to create platforms that can easily be accessed and monitored by the citizens themselves. Further, citizens would feel empowered, thus enhancing participation from a cross-section of the population.But even if users took part in the process of developing ICT tools, they are unlikely to use them unless the promoters take a deliberate effort to build the capacity of citizens; first to appreciate the importance of ICT as tools for empowerment and change, but also build the capacity of the citizenry to gainfully use these tools. This effort needs to be complemented by an on-going awareness-creation campaign that also communicates the lessons learnt and best practices from the implementation of such ICT for empowerment initiatives. Moreover, ensuring optimum visibility of efforts by ICT-for-Democracy initiatives would not only attract more users, but also other partners that are active or planning to start similar programmes may learn from what has been done or wish to partner, while also providing evidence that can be used to convince policy makers and duty bearers on how technology can be empowering.

Despite the many tools that are available for citizen engagement, it emerged that most tools remained unknown to the public and even to other organisations involved in similar work. Most of these tools were not promoted well enough among their intended users, and the lack of documentation of what they had done and the impact they had created partly explained this.

Gender mainstreaming: the gender aspect seems to be grossly ignored when deploying e-participation tools. Because many women in Uganda are disadvantaged socially, politically, and economically, initiatives should seek not to further disadvantage them. Sensitisation drives running parallel with women activities such as maternal and practical skills training should be explored. Initiators of these tools should further collaborate with gender-based organisations in developing and deploying ICT based citizen participation tools and programmes.

Impact assessment: All successful initiatives need vigorous monitoring and evaluation during the course of their duration and post executions to ascertain whether they are meeting the intended objectives. Most of the Ugandan initiatives studied seemed to be in the dark as to how the public and other stakeholders perceived their work, and the impact their work may have created. It is therefore imperative to carry out evaluations to understand what is being done right and what the enabling factors are, while capturing lessons and communicating them to the relevant stakeholders involved in similar work to avoid duplication of effort. As seen in the study, most of the piloted tools were funded by external donors or government budgets and for a specific period of time. After the expiry period, these tools tended to come to a standstill. This was evidenced in many of the electoral tools like the Uganda Election Watch 2011, Uchaguzi, Election Commission Voter SMS campaign and online Voters register and Citizen Election Watch IT (CEWIT). This not only raises the problem of measuring their impact but could also sour citizens' appetite for engaging with similar tools in the future. As witnessed in the election period, there was "too much" of some platforms, from different short codes created by civil society organisations, private companies, and government all reporting on election incidents. The creation of Uchaguzi and Uganda Elections Watch 2011 was a duplication of efforts and technologies.

Sustainability also remains a key challenge. As seen, most of the initiatives have been funded by donors, mainly foreign, and have hardly lasted beyond the donor grants even though for many of them the intention right from the outset was to make them sustainable. These initiatives can be used to find a way of building on the momentum they gained during election periods to extend their lifetime beyond the elections day and announcement of results. Even beyond the voting, there are many civic and political-related issues which they could metamorphose themselves into and start addressing with equal veracity and relevance as they did the monitoring of elections during 2010 and 2011.

Feedback mechanisms: Although some of the surveyed tools provided a mechanism for feedback from users, many of them did not have a feedback mechanism that allowed users to comment on the applicability of the tool or to know what had happened after the citizens had provided information, such as reports on poor service delivery or an electoral malpractices. As such, ICT tools have to be designed in such a way that there is a feedback mechanism to gain public confidence. Still, tools need to provide anonymity by maintaining privacy and security at all times for citizens to build confidence in their use.

There is need for policy advocacy in the area of access to ICT as well access to information. Civil society should take on advocacy campaigns calling for promoting rural access, promoting free access to information, reducing prices on IT equipment and reduction of taxes on ICT tools. This would help to curtail challenges of the digital divide and the high cost of accessing and using these tools. In Uganda, the costs of SMS remained very high – in some networks higher than a one-minute voice call, which hampered the usage of SMS-based tools.

5. CONCLUSION

This study has found that there are numerous tools being used in promoting civic participation in Uganda, most of them having been deployed during the run up to the February 2011 elections. Organisations are increasingly using ICT in their work with the mobile phone, social media and crowd sourcing gaining popularity. However, while organisations were convinced that ICT had eased their work, helped them to communicate to wider audiences, empowered citizenry, and promoted transparency, they were largely unaware of the numbers of people they were reaching or the extent of the impact created by their ICT tools. Project sustainability, addressing unequal access to and use of technology, literacy levels and promoting awareness were among the factors which the study found to be important to the success of ICT for participation projects. Going forward, it is crucial for organisations using ICT for participation and democracy to carry out extensive assessments before deploying the technology, work with others rather than duplicate efforts, create awareness and capacity among users, and continuously assess the impacts the ICT initiatives are creating.

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ANNEX

Assessment criteria	Questions
1. Amount, variety and quality of Content	• Use of bold text, bullets and tables. Charts, graphs • Use of existing offline documents • Frequency of updates • Provision for access to updated contented (RSS feeds, breaking news) • Relevance to target audience • Display of search results – ordered by date? Match to query? Alphabetical… • Popular pages • Site map • Is everything the institution does represented online?
2. Interactivity	• Are users able to perform the desired functions? • Personalization • Barriers /unnecessary steps to user's needs – subscription, use of names as opposed to anonymity. • Can users achieve their goals more effectively via the website as opposed to other means? Why?
3. Responsiveness	• Presence of a FAQ • Feedback – email or form • Submission of questions/content for inclusion • Contact details • Indication of response times (days or hours)
4. Navigation, Organisation, links and layout	• Inclusion of all primary navigation options on the homepage. • Visibility, click-ability of the navigation options • Information hierarchy – is it logical to users? • Search facility • Ease of navigation without use of the 'back button'.
5. Download, access and display	• Size, number of images and animation • Full or downloadable content/documents? • Access restrictions • Browser and platform compatibility

Annex 2 : Questionnaire and Interview Respondents (alphabetical by Organisation)

Organisation	Bio	Respondent Name	URL
Action for Development (ACFODE)	Since inception its inception 25 years ago, ACFODE has been an effective debate and action platform on issues related to women's empowerment through policy and advocacy campaigns, research and capacity building. Currently, the organisation has programs advocating for women's effective participation in politics and decision making, empowering local council women leaders at district level to engage in multi party politics as well as monitoring institutions mandated to promote democracy and good governance from a gender perspective. ACFODE is a member if DEMGroup	Paska Fortunate	www.acfode.org
African Youth Development Link	The African Youth Development link seeks to involve youth in development policy as a means to eliminating poverty and achieving the millennium development goals (MDGs). The organisation maintains youth-led community development forums across the country with a thematic focus on human rights and good governance, among others.	Ahmed Hadji	www.aydl.org
Busoga Rural Open Source and Development Initiative (BROSDI)	BROSDI is a grassroots based centre working to improve livelihoods through agricultural, health and education programs	Karamagi Ednah	www.brosdi.or.ug
Centre for Women in Governance (CEWIGO)	Established in 2006, CEWIGO works at national and district level to promote effective and inclusive participation of sexes in decision making. The organisation works toward governance that affirms gender equality, integrity, accountability and sustainable development.	Robinah Rubimbwa	www.cewigo.org
Development Network of Indigenous Voluntary Associations	DENIVA is a Ugandan Network of Non-Governmental and Community Based Organizations (NGOs/CBOs) providing a platform for collective action and a voice to voluntary local associations to strongly advocate for creation of more opportunities for people and CSO participation in the development of Uganda. DENIVA is a partner in CEWIT.	Arthur Wamanaga	www.deniva.or.ug
East African Business Week	Print Media	Edris Kisambira	www.busiweek.com
Electoral Commission of Uganda	The national elections body	Herbert Wamboko	www.ec.or.ug
E-Society programme Apac (2007 – 2009)	The E-Society project was aimed at improving governance and service delivery through ICTs in Apac district.	Adimo Naaman George	www.iicd.org/projects/uganda-e-society
Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE)	Through advocacy training, research and participation, FOWODE provides women in leadership positions a platform to learn, network, share experiences and advocate for gender equality in the decision making process.	Tibesigwa Diana	www.fowode.org

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Organisation	Bio	Respondent Name	URL
I-Network Uganda	The I-Network Dgroup is an ICT for Development organisation that doubles as a members platform for ICT Knowledge Sharing in Uganda.	Elisha Wasukira	www.i-network.or.ug
Kabarole Research and Resource Centre (KRC)	A research organisation based in Western Uganda with a mission and long term commitment to understanding the measures and drivers of poverty and its solutions. Under its Human Rights and Good governance thematic areas, KRC focuses on civil education, accountability, rights promotion, empowerment and governance issues. KRC is a partner in CEWIT.	John Murungi Amooti	www.krc.or.ug
Kiima Foods	An agricultural organisation that offers training and other activities in sustainable farming.	Samson B	
Mbarara District Local Government		Timbisiimirwa Sylvester	www.mbarara.go.ug
National Association of Women Organisations in Uganda (NAWOU)	An umbrella organisation for women organisations in Uganda.	Peace T. Kyamureku	www.nawouganda.org
Refugee Law Project, School of Law – Makerere University	The RLP, 'A centre for Justice and forced Migrants' seeks to ensure fundamental human rights of all asylum seeks, refugees and internally displaced persons in Uganda	Moses Alfred Nsubuga	www.refugeelawproject.org
Road Barrier Women Development Foundation (RWODF)	RWODF is a social livelihood and economic empowerment organisation that trains women in social economic development and human rights.	Kabau Uziah	
Rwenzori Association of Parents of Children with Disabilities (RAPCD)	Founded in 2004, RAPCD is a organisation through which parents/guardians and families of children with disabilities create a unified voice for the disabled in Kasese district. The organisation sensitises the community on the rights and opportunities of the disabled.	Kabugho Faith	www.betterplace.org/en/organisations/rapcd
Rwenzori Information Centres Network (RIC-NET)	RIC-NET is a network of information centres in the Rwenzori region of western Uganda. RIC-NET is a partner in CEWIT.	John Silco	www.ricnet.info
Rwenzori Information Centres Network (RIC-NET)		AICTO	
The East African	Print media	Esther Nakkazi	www.theeastafrican.co.ke
The Observer Media LTD	Print media	Frank Kisakye	www.observer.ug

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Organisation	Bio	Respondent Name	URL
Transparency International (TI)	Established in 1993, TI, Uganda is involved in mobilising the citizenry and other civic groups to engage in the anti-corruption agenda. TI, Uganda is a member of DEMGroup.	Robert Lugolobi	http://tiuganda.org
Uganda National NGO Forum	A platform for knowledge and experience sharing for NGOs to influence governance and development process in Uganda.	Richard Ssewakiryanga	http://ngoforum.or.ug
Ugandans at Heart	A consortium of politicians and CSOs that seek to effect democratic change in Uganda.	Abbey Semuwemba	www.activists4change.org
Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET)	WOUGNET was started in 2000 by several women's organisations in Uganda to develop the use of ICT among women as tools to share information and address gender issues collectively. WOUGNET provides information access to human rights, health, agriculture, democracy and other areas that promote women development in Uganda.	Gorreti Amuriat	www.wougnet.org.

About SPIDER

The Swedish Program for ICT in Developing Regions (SPIDER) is a resource centre for ICT for Development (ICT4D). SPIDER was established in 2004 and is primarily financed by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), with complimentary funding from Stockholm University. SPIDER is part of the Department of Computer and Systems Sciences (DSV) at Stockholm University.

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CIPESA

About CIPESA

The Collaboration on International ICT Policy in East and Southern Africa (CIPESA) is one of two centres established in 2004 under the Catalysing Access to Information and Communication Technologies in Africa (CATIA) initiative funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DfID). CIPESA is a leading centre for research and information brokerage to enable policy makers in the region to understand ICT policy issues, and for various stakeholders to use ICT to improve livelihoods.

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