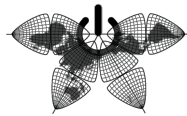


# COSOME Informational Meetings in Uganda

13 January - 17 January 2014



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## **Introduction**

Technology has made it different (sometimes easier and sometimes harder) for civil society and advocacy groups to collect and share data in near real-time with large groups of people during elections. Every election is a learning experience, but far too often lessons learned during election observation stay within the borders of the country holding the election. To take advantage of this kind of experience, Oxfam Novib funded a week long trip to Uganda for three members of the Burundian election observation network team (the network is called the [Coalition de la Société Civile pour le Monitoring Electoral](#) or COSOME).

This report is designed to do two things:

- collect and distill information exchanges between COSOME and Ugandan civil

society who were actively involved in monitoring elections in Uganda in 2011

- gather information on election observation teams in both countries to outline past experiences and future plans - this component will supplement a feasibility study for Oxfam Novib's support of civil society in the Burundi 2015 elections

This report will first lay out the conclusions from the skill share between COSOME and the Ugandan election observation organizations. The remainder of the report will provide information on elections in Uganda, and provide a brief overview of Ugandan civil society's projects carried out to observe and improve the 2011 elections for background information and context. Meeting details and notes are included in the Annex of the report and will not be published, but shared internally with the Burundi team and the Oxfam Burundi office. When information from meetings is relevant it will be cited within the report.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations for the COSOME Network**

- COSOME needs to start immediately if they are to be prepared for the elections. All of the election observation organizations mentioned preparation time as a major thing they would have done differently. COSOME has 18 months to prepare, which is about the same amount of time that the Ugandan organizations had (and now regret that it was too short).
- An emphasis on longterm observation (from election registration through to election day) will be critical to catch rigging. Voter rolls manipulation was cited as common and widespread in Uganda and several Ugandan organizations strongly warned Burundians to be alert during the voter registration process to catch early stage rigging.
- Tactics in rigging elections in East Africa are consistent and teams can learn a lot from each other about how to mitigate the threat of rigging. Ugandan elections teams clearly know a lot about Burundi's electoral issues and are very well positioned to provide direct support as Burundi's team develops their program.
- Given the ICT penetration rate in Burundi, offline mobilization will be essential for online work to have any effect for the general public at all.
- If COSOME is to manage another deployment of Ushahidi as it did in the 2010 elections,<sup>1</sup> offline mobilization and a larger campaign will be necessary to attract more reports from a more diverse group and make the information they collect useful for a public that is offline.
- The Burundi team is faced with many options and judging from the questions they asked during meetings, it seemed that the Ugandans' innovation in election monitoring was a bit overwhelming for the COSOME team. A carefully crafted and focused strategy and workplan for the elections will be critical for the Burundi

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<sup>1</sup> <http://burundi.ushahidi.com/>

team. They will have to say no to some types of activities based on a careful assessment of what is feasible, strategic, and tactical. For a start, they need support in :

- foundational knowledge in traditional methodologies of electoral observation
- statistical support to unpack census data and make decisions about sample selection for poll observation
- support in methods for selecting and training an observation team
- facilitation support to make decisions, prioritize next steps, and build a work plan

### **Observations about ICT Components in Ugandan Election Observation Projects**

- Impact of ICT use in election monitoring is unclear. More transparent corruption doesn't necessarily influence election outcomes, and a large number of reports does not mean that a crowdsourced platform resulted in either transparency or accountability.
- In-house technical expertise made it easier for Ugandan organizations to designate roles and responsibilities, which helped provide clearer focus on technology as a supplement to offline work (rather than a distraction requiring constant maintenance and attention to keep it functioning). But in-house technical expertise is expensive and rare.
- Election observation teams in East Africa are as new as East African multi-party elections. Lessons must be shared quickly and efficiently between country teams.
- The newness of election observation means that there is a crowded field of election observing organizations and care should be taken to avoid duplicating effort or overcomplicating implementation (for example, COSOME has 400 member organizations, and all of the organizations met in Uganda were members of one of many consortiums).
- The timing of technology innovation in election observation is in some ways unfortunate for organizations just entering into the election observation. Because organizations new to election observation are starting with a litany of technology options they can be overwhelmed and distracted from developing sound observation and monitoring strategies.
- Elections take place on a single day (or sometimes three days). The amount of effort that goes into campaigns and ICT infrastructure should be used between elections for work that is complementary (like public service delivery and accountability).

### **Background**

Uganda is only recently a multi-party state and is still struggling to develop a strong opposition party and operating space for civil society. In 2011, president Yoweri

Museveni (National Resistance Movement) was elected to office for his 26th year. He is currently the fifth longest serving leader in Africa, and he has popular support. Despite this, there has been some repression of public demonstration, media self-censorship, SMS filtering, and a widespread feeling that elections are rigged (despite observation resulting in reports of mostly “free and fair” elections). The technology infrastructure of the country, relevant when considering campaigning strategies and ICT possibilities for observation, is changing quickly. There is a 13% internet penetration rate<sup>2</sup>, 48% mobile penetration rate<sup>3</sup>, airtime costs about 100 UGX per SMS<sup>4</sup>, 250 UGX per minute of voice<sup>5</sup>, and a literacy rate of 73%<sup>6</sup>. Burundi has a significantly lower penetration rate of ICT infrastructure, (one of the lowest in the world), but a higher literacy rate.<sup>7</sup>

Civil society organizations working on election-related issues are all relatively new, with the oldest beginning observation work in 2001 (UJCC<sup>8</sup>). With two elections’ worth of experience, Ugandan civil society has developed numerous programs, projects, coalitions and consortiums in their short history of electoral transparency work. This report will go into most detail about the CEW-IT consortium because it hosted the Burundian team. It is a consortium<sup>9</sup> with experience monitoring the Ugandan (and other East African) elections, and it operates at the national level. All of these characteristics mean that CEW-IT had the most relevant expertise to share.

## **Tactics Shared by Ugandan Civil Society**

Before considering the efficiency of civil society tactics, the report will briefly present different tactics that Ugandan civil society used in the elections. The majority of these tactics were presented and discussed at informational meetings held during the skill share.

### **Offline (and Traditional Media) Mobilization**

Many groups in Uganda used deep networks, traditional media, and innovative offline tactics to mobilize around elections. Here are a few of the tactics surfaced during meetings between COSOME and Ugandan organizations:

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/uganda\\_statistics.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/uganda_statistics.html)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/uganda\\_statistics.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/uganda_statistics.html)

<sup>4</sup> .05USD

<sup>5</sup> .15USD

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/uganda\\_statistics.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/uganda_statistics.html)

<sup>7</sup> There is a 1.7% internet penetration rate ([http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/burundi\\_statistics.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/burundi_statistics.html)), 22.3% mobile penetration rate ([http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/burundi\\_statistics.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/burundi_statistics.html)), airtime costs about .06USD, .15USD per minute of voice, and a literacy rate of 85%.

<sup>8</sup> Founded in 1963 the Uganda Joint Christian Council began election observation in 2011.

<http://ujcc.co.ug/about.html>

<sup>9</sup> CEW-IT is a consortium of 4 NGOs (RWEKO, PAC, CEFORD, ACORD) that work in each of the 4 regions of Uganda working on issues of good governance, accountability, and transparency at the regional level.

- Citizens' Manifesto Project (RWEEO)  
The Citizens Manifesto is a document developed in consultation with communities to determine priorities for governance at national and regional levels. It is printed in simplified form and distributed in communities. The goal of the manifesto is to provide a tool for citizens to hold leaders to account. It has resulted in politicians integrating much of the manifesto into their own political platforms. Each year on so-called Citizen Manifesto days (the anniversary of elections), politicians meet with communities that they represent and the public assess how far leaders have come with manifesto priorities. For politicians to get elected they increasingly are forced to integrate Manifesto priorities and for them to get reelected they are increasingly required to attend and actively participate in Citizen Manifesto days.
- Face the Citizens Campaign (CCEDU<sup>10</sup> - Citizens' Coalition for Electoral Democracy in Uganda)  
This campaign was designed to provide politicians with a platform to explain their stance on issues to citizens. The ultimate goal is to encourage voters to hold politicians to account if they do not follow through on their electoral promises. As part of the campaign, CCEDU organizes debates between politicians. The debates happen on the radio (for debates between local officials and information about the elections) and on television (debates between regional level members of parliament and between presidential candidates). 90% of politicians appeared on one of these outlets to announce their campaign platforms.
- Honour Your Vote Campaign (CCEDU - Citizens' Coalition for Electoral Democracy in Uganda)  
The goal of the Honour Your Vote Campaign was to encourage and support citizens in the process of holding leaders accountable by providing information (through the Face the Citizens Campaign) and advocating for serious consideration about candidates before voting. The campaign slogan and materials were designed to get the public thinking about the value of their vote. CCEDU trained DJs to deliver civic education messages and they carried out a nationwide branded campaign. The campaign message and materials were disseminated in traditional media outlets and on branded outreach materials like reflective vests for motorcycle taxis. Explaining why local radio outreach was so critical, CCEDU explained: "there is a big difference between civic education and knowledge - just because someone doesn't speak a global international language does not mean they can't win a political debate with a university educated man. This is where local language radio is critical." This is one of the few tactics that has been researched to determine its impact. The Electoral

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<sup>10</sup> [www.ccedu.org](http://www.ccedu.org)

Commission conducted a survey and said that the campaign increased voter participants by 36%; a survey by DGF<sup>11</sup> who funds CCEDU found that it increased participation by 32%.

### Election 2011 ICT Projects

During Uganda's general, harmonized elections in 2011, several organizations set up citizen reporting websites and campaigned to populate them with reports to varying degrees of success<sup>12</sup>.

1. National Vote Register (improved using technology) - created by Ugandan Electoral Commission

The Electoral Commission (EC) of Uganda, which has been criticised for its lack of independence from the executive branch of government, is in charge of accrediting observers, tallying votes, handling the administration of the electoral process, and announcing winners. Despite questions of transparency and independence, the EC has worked with international actors and independently to improve access to the voter registration process using ICT tools. First, they posted voter registration rolls online during the voter roll display period and set up an SMS system to allow citizens to text in and receive their voter registration status update. Secondly, and closer to the 2011 elections, they set up an SMS system that allowed for submission of a national ID number and receipt of the location of their polling stations. The latter SMS system was used over 700,000 times on the national election day in 2011.

2. UgandaWatch<sup>13</sup> - managed by DemGroup

This project was developed as the first ICT-aided reporting platform in Uganda. It was built using Managing News and FrontLine SMS. The project was designed to collect information from trained election observers in a parallel vote tabulation process (PVT). The site which was (at first) the only public site for SMS reporting for the election, was obstructed and taken offline for several hours. During this time period, a separate organisation launched the Uchaguzi Uganda project, a public facing website.

3. Uchaguzi Uganda<sup>14</sup> - managed by CEW-IT<sup>15</sup> (Citizens' Watch IT)

Where UgandaWatch use data collected by trained observers at a representative sample of polling station, Uchaguzi Uganda collected information from the general public in addition to teams of observers. Their stated goal was to "make

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.dgf.ug/>

<sup>12</sup> Success is defined here as having documented impact or comparatively large traffic in comparison to other similar initiatives

<sup>13</sup> [www.ugandawatch.org](http://www.ugandawatch.org)

<sup>14</sup> [www.uchaguzi.co.ug](http://www.uchaguzi.co.ug)

<sup>15</sup> <http://cewit.or.ug/>

every citizen an election monitor.” Uchaguzi Uganda received 40,000 SMSs and 3,000 unique website hits on the day of the election. In the last two years, CEW-IT (Citizens’ Watch IT), who hosted the platform has worked to parlay the technical and community building work from the elections into public service delivery and civic education projects that address governance issues in between elections.

4. Trac FM<sup>16</sup> - platform created by Wouter Dijkstra<sup>17</sup>

This software was developed by Wouter Dijkstra after he did research on interactive media for citizen-monitoring data collection in Uganda<sup>18</sup>. It is designed to manage interactive discussion between the public and radio stations through SMS. The main function is to assist radio DJs in carrying out polls which are then fed back to listeners. The software, developed after the 2011 elections, is being used in Kampala, Rwenzori and other areas throughout Uganda.

## Relevant Reading

[Hellstrom and Karefelt \(2012\) Mobile Participation? Crowdsourcing during the 2011 Uganda General Elections](#)

[ICT for Anti-Corruption, Democracy and Education in East Africa](#)

[EC report on Uganda 2011 elections](#)

[IFES Tech work in Uganda](#)

[National Voter Registration innovation](#) (check registration status)

[National Voter Registration innovation](#) (get polling station address)

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<sup>16</sup> <http://techpresident.com/news/wegov/24706/trac-fm-radio-station-stirs-debate-uganda-data>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.tracfm.org/>

<sup>18</sup> <http://dare.uva.nl/document/164317>