CITIZEN

PARTICIPATION AND TECHNOLOGY

AN NDI STUDY

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> > > > > TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 5

GLOSSARY OF TERMS 6

LIST OF ACRONYMS 8

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 9

INTRODUCTION 15

1. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND FRAMEWORK 17

- CITIZEN VOICE 18
- POLITICAL SPACE 20
- GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY 23

2. EXPERIENCES FROM NINE PROGRAMS 27

- BURMA 27
- MEXICO 34
- UGANDA 41
- EGYPT 51
- GLOBAL 52
- GHANA 54
- PERU 57

3. CONCLUSIONS 59

BIBLIOGRAPHY 64

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> > > > > GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Term	Definition
Civil Society Organization (CSO)	The wide array of non-governmental and not-for-profit organizations that have a presence in public life, expressing the interests and values of their members or others, based on ethical, cultural, political, scientific, religious, or philanthropic considerations.
Community of Practice	A group of people who share a craft, profession, and/or interest. Through the process of sharing information and experiences with the group, members learn from each other, and have an opportunity to develop themselves personally and professionally.
Crowdsourcing	The practice of obtaining needed services, ideas, or content by soliciting contributions from a large group of people - especially an online community - rather than from traditional sources or suppliers. In the development community, crowdsourcing information has focused on tactical mapping and reporting in emergencies, market information sharing, or community planning.
Digital Technologies	Any technology that facilitates communications over the internet. This may include through computers, mobile phones, and web-ready devices. The term also includes the necessary software, middleware, storage, and audio-visual systems which enable users to access, store, transmit, and manipulate information. An alternate term used in international development is "information and communications technology" (ICT). We use the term "digital technologies" synonymously with ICT.
Freedom Fone	A database-driven software application that allows people to access information through voice calls made on land, mobile, and the internet.
Ghost Polling Station	Polling stations that appear on an election results list but that were not part of polling station lists provided in advance to citizen groups or political parties. Ghost polling stations that appear post-election are a potential indicator of fraud in an election.
Interactive Voice Response (IVR)	A technology that allows a computer to interact with humans through the use of voice and keypad tones. In telecommunications, IVR allows customers to interact with a company's host system via a telephone keypad or by speech recognition, after which they can service their own inquiries by following the IVR dialogue. IVR systems can respond with prerecorded or dynamically generated audio to further direct users on how to proceed
Interactive Website	A website with a database which the user can manipulate in some form, for example by submitting content, querying content, or by displaying content dynamically (such as a map or graphic).

Term	Definition
Political Process Monitoring	Civil society-led initiatives that hold government officials accountable by monitoring and reporting on their actions. Political process monitoring efforts involve collecting and analyzing information, disseminating findings, and using those findings to raise public awareness and government responsiveness. Examples include: budget process monitoring; legislative/ parliamentary monitoring; monitoring government follow-through (i.e., execution of policies laws and mandates); and shadow reporting (i.e., monitoring compliance with international treaties and commitments).
Quick Count	An independent verification of election results using a statistically-based random sample.
Shortcode	Special telephone numbers, significantly shorter than full telephone numbers, that can be used to address text messages and multimedia messages. Shortcodes are designed to be easier to read and to remember than normal telephone numbers. Like telephone numbers, shortcodes are unique to each mobile operator at the technological level. Shortcodes are widely used for value-added services such as television program voting, ordering ringtones, charity donations, and mobile services.
SMS	A text messaging service component of phone, web, or mobile communication systems, using standardized communications protocols that allow the exchange of short text messages between fixed line or mobile phone devices.
Social Media	The means of interactions among people in which they create, share, and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. Social media depends on mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content.
Theory of Change	A logical framework that explains how a set of activities and accomplishments can produce long-range results. It articulates the assumptions about the process through which change will occur and specifies the ways in which intermediate outcomes related to achieving the desired long-term change will be brought about.
Website	A set of related web pages served from a single web domain with relevant content by an individual, institution, or organization. All publicly accessible websites collectively constitute the World Wide Web.
Web Portal	One specifically designed webpage within a website which collects information together from diverse sources in a uniform way.

> > > > > LIST OF ACRONYMS

ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
BET	Burma Election Tracker
BP	Burma Partnership
CCEDU	Citizens Coalition for Electoral Democracy in Uganda
CDD-Ghana	Center for Democratic Development – Ghana
CEWIT	Citizens Election Watch-IT
CODEO	Coalition of Domestic Election Observers
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DEMGroup	Democracy Monitoring Group
DGF	Democratic Governance Facility
EU	European Union
IAL	Interactive Audio Library
ICTs	Information and Communication Technologies
IFE	Federal Electoral Institute
INMUJERES	National Institute for Women
MP	Member of Parliament
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NED	National Endowment for Democracy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NLD	National League for Democracy
PAN	National Action Party
PCS	Parliamentary Call System
PIC	Partners in Change Coalition
PLS	Parliamentary Liaison System
PMO	Parliamentary Monitoring Organization
PRD	Party of the Democratic Revolution
PRI	Institutional Revolutionary Party
PVT	Parallel Vote Tabulation
RD	*Reflexión Democrática*, or Democratic Reflection
RIC - NET	Rwenzori Information Centers Network
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
USpeak	Uganda Speak
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The recent, rapid rise in the use of digital technology among citizens and civil society organizations offers the possibility of strengthening citizens' voice in politics, carving out new political space for activism and promoting more government accountability. It is clear that these technologies are increasingly complementing citizens' political participation, changing interrelationships between citizens, organizations, and public institutions, and expanding notions of political behavior and participation. Examples include the use of social media for mobile organizing in Arab Spring countries, interactive websites and text messaging systems that enable direct communications between constituents and their elected leaders in Uganda, crowdsourcing election day experiences, and adapting computers and phones in order to increase opportunities for participation in the earthquake reconstruction process in Haiti. NDI has been integrating technology into democracy programs for over 15 years and has established guidelines for the design and implementation of programs in which technology is a central component. Technology is increasingly used in the Institute's work, including in approximately 56 different citizen participation programs implemented in every region of the world over the past four years.

> > > > > **Citizens' political participation** can be a powerful, transformative force for both political and socioeconomic development.[1, 2] It is instrumental in establishing democratic norms and practices and encourages governments to develop policies and programs that are responsive and accountable. Identifying and supporting the types of participation (i.e., voting, raising public awareness, advocating for an issue, monitoring political processes) that will best promote democratic development in different contexts is a challenge shared by democracy support practitioners, donors, and domestic organizations alike. NDI has a theory of change that it uses to make decisions about the type of citizen participation to support in a particular context. It posits that, while each of the democratic dimensions of *citizen voice*, *political space*, and *government accountability* is essential to democratization, there is an underlying interrelationship that is necessary to ensure democratic governance because it is at the intersection of the three where politics is practiced, democratic skills are developed, and democratic practices are established and deepened**.** Relationships between citizens, civil society organizations (CSOs), political parties, and public officials are initiated or enhanced at that intersection and political space is created, occupied, or made more meaningful. When measuring the results of NDI's citizen participation programs, the Institute looks at changes in citizen voice, political space, and government accountability. The process may look different from one country to the next, but will always include the interplay between values, norms, institutions, and processes, and will necessarily involve citizens fulfilling certain roles and responsibilities, including selecting political leaders and holding their government accountable. This theoretical framework assists NDI staff in determining which aspects of voice, space,

1 UNDP Human Development Report. Deepening Democracy in a Fragmented World. 2001. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2002>.
2 Department for International Development Research and Evidence Division. "The Politics of Poverty: Elites, Citizens and States." (2010).

or accountability might underlie democratic deficits in a country and in making appropriate choices regarding the form and quality of citizen participation the Institute's programs should support to help democracy deliver on its promise of real improvements in people's lives.

NDI understands how to identify and support the types of citizen participation that contribute to democratization, but the exact role and results of technology use in this process are less clear. The rising use of technology to increase citizens' access to information and provide avenues of communication to public officials in hopes that this will transform how politics is practiced seems driven by apparently underlying, yet largely untested, assumptions about technology's ability to increase the quantity, quality, and democratizing influence of citizen participation. Despite the exuberance for new technologies, there is not enough data available on the impacts they have had on the political processes and institutions they are intended to influence in emerging democracies. This creates additional challenges in designing and implementing programs.

NDI created this study with the support of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) to examine the role digital technologies are playing in programs aimed at increasing citizen voice and political space and fostering accountability relationships with government. Research was driven by the recognition that better insights are needed into the relationship between new technologies, the citizen participation programs in which they are deployed, and the broader political outcomes they aim to achieve. Digital technologies are increasingly interwoven into the fabric of political and civic life around the world and it's important that donors, academics, and democracy support organizations understand the challenges and opportunities of using them in citizen participation programs in order to provide effective assistance.

The study provides an overview of the Institute's approach to citizens' participation, discusses how new technologies may be influencing this approach, and examines the integration of technologies in select programs. It identifies challenges and opportunities the use of technology presents and offers conclusions to inform the work of NDI, other democracy assistance practitioners, donors, and civic actors.

Initially, the research team conducted a comprehensive desk-based review of 56 citizen participation programs conducted from 2009 – 2012 where NDI employed technology tools and then interviewed staff who had worked on the programs to determine which might offer the best lessons. This was followed by roundtable discussions with external experts on technology and democracy development and with NDI staff involved in technology and citizen participation programs. This process produced four vignettes, which serve as descriptive snapshots that provide examples of NDI's use of differing technologies in several programs, and identified five programs for case study analysis, which was subsequently conducted in Mexico, Uganda, and Thailand between October 8 and December 1, 2012. Researchers conducted key informant interviews[3] and most significant change[4] evaluative exercises with NDI staff and local partner organizations. Researchers also interviewed select public officials involved in the programs and individuals involved in politics, technology, and the development sectors in each country, including those running programs designed to use technology to increase citizen participation, government transparency, or accountability.

> > > > > **The Institute assembled a research team drawn from specialists on its in-house citizen participation and technology teams to explore the following questions:**

- **Does the use of technology in citizen participation programs amplify citizen voice, allow for greater political space, and increase government responsiveness and accountability?**

- **Are programs' use of digital technologies increasing the political agency and the political clout of citizens?**

This study features information and analysis drawn from the initiatives listed in the table on page 12. This is complemented by insights provided by other democracy and development practitioners who participated in the study by attending the roundtables or being interviewed.

The research highlighted the need for continued study to develop better methodologies and frameworks for analyzing the use of technology in citizen participation programming and its impact on democratic development. Several key themes were also identified from the research. Overall, the research shows that while the numbers of citizens participating in technology-driven programs is growing, the type and quality of their political participation – and therefore its impact on democratization -- varies. One reason for this is that while an exuberance for technology is shared amongst donors and implementing organizations, a similar enthusiasm is not felt for politics. This mitigates the transformative possibilities that digital technologies may present by focusing more on the quality and efficiency of the use of technology than on its utility in helping citizens address underlying power inequities. The research suggests that, in order to leverage technology's potential, programs would benefit from additional resources and technical assistance in non-technology aspects such as political analysis and strategy.

The study's key findings also include the following:

1. **Technology can be used to readily create spaces and opportunities for citizens to express their voices, but making these voices politically stronger and the spaces more meaningful is a harder challenge that is political and not technological in nature.** It is also one often overshadowed by short-term, high profile, projects that emphasize technology and not politics. In the course of this research, donors, practitioners and local groups alike constructed programs around an exuberance for technology to increase citizens' access to information and provide avenues of communication in hopes that this would transform how politics is practiced. This approach presumes that providing information about how to express their voice with new technology tools would be sufficient for citizens to do so, and that this would lead to a cohesive movement of democratic engagement**. The research findings imply that a more involved process is often necessary in order to maximize the potential for democratic developments, including providing more technical assistance in the non–technological aspect of programs.** For a technology intervention to have the desired impact, it may require the development of clear political goals, opportunities

3 A 40-question structured guide was used for the interviews.
4 The Most Significant Change Technique is a form of participatory monitoring and evaluation that involves the collection of significant change stories emanating from the field level and the systematic selection of the most significant of these stories by panels of designated stakeholders or staff. For more information, see Rick Davies and Jess Dart. The "*Most Significant Change' (MSC) Technique*". April 2005.

	Country	Program	Dates of Field Visits
CASE STUDIES	**Burma**	Burma Election Tracker: Support to a coalition of Burmese democracy advocacy organizations operating in exile for the Burma Election Tracker website. The tracker enabled activist coordination across a wide geographic area and provided compelling geographic representation of data on abuses during the 2010 elections. **Website: http://www.burmaelectiontracker.org/**	**October 29 - November 5, 2012**
	Mexico	*Seguridad con Justicia:* Assistance to the *Seguridad con Justicia* (Security with Justice) coalitions in Mexican border states for websites and social media strategy to provide information to citizens on proposed security reforms. **Website: http://www.seguridadconjusticia.org/**	**October 8-12, 2012**
	Mexico	2% and More Women in Politics: Support to the 2% and More Women in Politics coalition to use digital and social media for rapid mobilization around a petition for electoral reforms.	
	Uganda	UgandaWatch: Support to domestic election observation organizations for UgandaWatch, which enabled citizens to submit election abuses during the 2011 elections by Short Message System (SMS) and displayed it geographically in real time. **Website: http://www.ugandawatch.org/**	**November 26 – December 1, 2012**
	Uganda	USpeak: Creation of the USpeak platform, a casework tracking system for citizens to contact their Member of Parliament (MP) via SMS and for MPs to manage their constituency casework.	
VIGNETTES	**Egypt**	Ally Sotak (Raise Your Voice): Assistance to a coalition that provided civic education in advance of the elections in 2011 through a combination of social media strategies and on-the-ground grassroots events. **Website: http://en.allysotak.com/**	
	Ghana	CODEO: Support to the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO) for an SMS-based data collection system multi-platform social media strategy **Website: http://www.codeoghana.org/codeo-2012-map.html**	
	Global	Opening Parliament: Facilitate networking among parliamentary monitoring organizations (PMOs) on issues of parliamentary openness and democratic reform. **Website: http://www.openingparliament.org**	
	Peru	131 *Voces* (131 Voices): Assistance to local partner *Reflexión Democrática* in the creation of the 131 *Voces* website for citizens to follow proposed legislation and provide comments. **Website: http://131voces.pe/**	

for leadership development, substantive work with intermediary groups, and for relationships with public officials to be fostered and established - all of which take time and resources.

2. **Technology that was used to purposefully connect citizens' groups and amplify their voices had more political impact.** For example, interactive websites in both the Burma Election Tracker and Citizen Security and Justice program in Mexico served as umbrellas that unified disparate groups in coalition under a common campaign theme. This resulted in greater coordination and cooperation amongst the groups, greater impact on their issues, and demonstrated the transformative possibilities of the strategic application of technologies.

3. **There is a scarcity of data on specific demographic groups' use of, and barriers to technology for political participation. Programs seeking to close the digital divide as an instrument of narrowing the political divide should be informed by more research into barriers to access to both politics and technology.** This should be carried into monitoring and evaluation, where additional work is needed to identify better data points for effective evaluations on political participation that is enabled specifically by technology especially for constituencies such as women, people with disabilities, young people, and ethnic minorities. While technologies can be used to a create new political space for citizen engagement, occupation of this space remains a challenge as **the new space is often occupied by the same individuals and groups with the most access prior to the introduction of new technology. In this way, technology may be easily used as a quick and convenient way to continue informal and patrimonial relations.**

4. **There is a blurring of the meaning between the technologies of open government data[5] and the politics of open government that clouds program strategies and implementation.** This lack of precision had various stakeholders in programs using the same "open government" terminology, yet articulating different examples of successful outcomes, creating a "where you stand depends on where you sit" situation regarding both the application of technologies and the assessment of their efficacy. This dynamic emerged in many research activities and had various stakeholders speaking about the same activities from very different perspectives. For example, individuals with a technology focus more often cited governments' use of social media, legislative websites, or application programming interfaces (APIs) with government databases as positive examples of technology "opening" government. In this case, access to government *data* defined government openness and implied corresponding citizen action and government responsiveness as a result. Meanwhile, issue advocacy groups and civil society leaders complained that, despite access to more information and new communication channels, they were no better able to engage in meaningful policy discussions or influence decisions than before. For these individuals, open data indicated more transparent government, but not more openness to participatory, inclusive, or accountable decision making.

5 Open government data means data produced or commissioned by government or government-controlled entities that can be freely used, reused and redistributed by anyone. Source: http://opengovernmentdata.org/

5. **Attempts to simply crowdsource public inputs will not result in users self-organizing into politically influential groups, since citizens lack the opportunities to develop leadership, unity, and commitment around a shared vision necessary for meaningful collective action.** Citizens must engage in a variety of activities beyond communication and information sharing in order to build a counterweight to entrenched power inequities. These may include joining civic associations, civic education, deliberation and dialogue, negotiating, lobbying, mobilizing and civil disobedience. For example, in the Mexico Citizen Security and Justice program, coalitions of CSOs used a crowdsourcing approach to engage large numbers of citizens who they then engaged in a range of activities, incrementally bringing them into a broader political campaign that expanded citizens' skills and knowledge, provided meaningful interactions with public officials, and strengthened the coalition's political base. Conversely, the Uganda USpeak and Peru 131 Voices programs also used a crowdsourcing approach for citizen inputs but did not offer additional opportunities for engagement. As a result, each is struggling with the next steps that would allow citizen voices to resonate.

6. **Political will and the technical capacity to engage citizens in policy making, or providing accurate data on government performance are lacking in many emerging democracies. Technology may have changed institutions' *ability* to respond to citizen demands but its mere presence has not fundamentally changed *actual* government responsiveness.** Compounding this is that increased access to information and communication channels heightens citizens' expectations that their input will be considered and that public officials will respond. A common refrain from research participants was that failure to manage or meet these expectations can have a deleterious effect on citizen trust in government institutions, and ultimately democratic development.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid rise in the use of technology among citizens and civil society organizations is increasingly complementing citizen participation and challenging institutions and paradigms in ways that directly affect the relationships between governments and citizens. New technologies offer the possibility of strengthening citizens' voice in politics and governance, creating political spaces for activism, and promoting increased government accountability. There is rising use of technology tools to increase citizens' access to information and provide avenues of communication to public officials in hopes that this will transform how politics is practiced. Despite the exuberance for technologies, there is little data available on the impacts they have had on the political processes and institutions they are intended to influence in emerging democracies. Additionally, the organizations adopting them require new kinds of technical assistance, which has also been little studied.

NDI undertook this research to improve understanding of the underlying assumptions being made about technology's ability to increase the quantity, quality and democratizing influence of citizen participation. Better insights are needed into the relationship among technologies, the citizen participation programs in which they are deployed, and the broader political outcomes they aim to achieve. Digital technologies are interwoven into the fabric of political and civic life around the world and it is important that donors, academics, and democracy support organizations understand the challenges and opportunities of using them in citizen participation programs in order to provide effective assistance.

In 2012, NDI received funding from the NED to investigate this topic. Research sought to answer the following questions:

- Does the use of technology in citizen participation programs amplify citizen voice, allow for greater political space, and increase government responsiveness and accountability?
- Are programs' use of digital technologies increasing the political agency and the political clout of citizens?

The assertions of this study reflect the results of this research. The study is organized into three sections. Section one offers an overview of the project's research methodology and the citizen participation theory of change that provides the analytical framework, a brief discussion of how technology may be influencing key aspects that framework, and several examples from case studies and vignettes. Section two presents five case studies and four vignettes resulting from project research. Section three offers conclusions.

Citizen Participation and Democratization

The term citizen has an inherently political meaning. It implies a certain type of relationship between people and government. NDI's citizen participation programs – those that include the support of civic and voter education, get-out-the-vote efforts, issue organizing and advocacy, budget oversight and government monitoring – help citizens play an active political role. From NDI's viewpoint, citizen participation is both intrinsic and instrumental to democratization. Intrinsically, participation embodies fundamental democratic values, such as freedom of speech and assembly. Instrumentally, organized citizen participation can influence the development of norms and practices and the behavior of institutions through advocacy, awareness raising and monitoring efforts. The type and quality of participation matters greatly for democratization. Ideally, participation activates citizens, creates relationships with decision makers, and promotes an appropriate balance of power between citizens and government.

1 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND FRAMEWORK

Research conducted for this project used a qualitative, mixed-method approach. This included: a review of literature related to technology and citizen participation; a desk-based review of approximately 56 citizen participation programs conducted from 2009 – 2012 where NDI employed technology tools; and roundtable discussions with external experts on technology and democracy development and with the NDI staff involved in technology and participation programs.

> > > > > **As part of the desk-based review,** NDI researchers assessed programs based on set criteria established in order to determine which programs merited detailed study. Selection criteria included the prominence of technology in the program approach, the type of technology utilized, and whether NDI directly implemented the technology component rather than engaging a contractor. This process produced four vignettes, which serve as descriptive snapshots providing examples of NDI's use of different technologies in several programs, and identified five programs for in-depth case study analysis. When selecting programs for case study analysis, researchers chose those that represented diverse geographic regions and spanned a range of political spaces from open to closed.

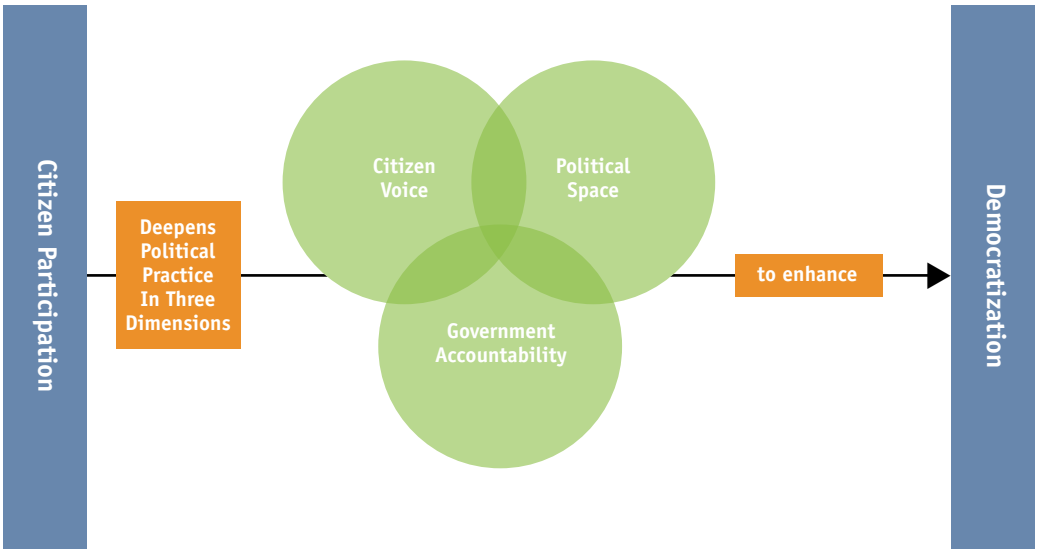
Members of NDI's research team traveled to Uganda, Mexico, and Thailand between October 8 and December 1, 2012 for case study research. They conducted key informant interviews and most significant change evaluative exercises with NDI staff and local partner organizations. Researchers also interviewed select public officials involved in the programs and individuals involved in politics, technology, and the development sectors in each country, including those running programs designed to use technology to increase citizen participation, government transparency, or accountability. NDI's researchers presented the study's preliminary findings for comment at the Right to Information & Transparency in the Digital Age conference hosted by the Program for Liberation Technology at the Center on Democracy, Development and the Rule of Law at Stanford University held March 11-13, 2013.

Analytical Framework

NDI's citizen participation theory of change provides the analytical framework for gauging how technology tools have enabled or enhanced citizen engagement in political processes, expanded political spaces and/or made them more meaningful, and promoted government accountability. The theory delineates NDI's views about the role that citizen participation plays in democratic development and underscores the idea that participation is essential for democratization because it is through this participation that citizens develop a voice, expand political space, and foster government accountability. It posits that, while each of the democratic dimensions of citizen voice, political space, and government accountability is essential to democratization, there is an underlying interrelationship that is necessary to ensure democratic governance because it is at this intersection that politics is practiced, democratic skills are developed, and democratic practices are established and deepened. Relationships between citizens, CSOs, political parties, and public officials are initiated or enhanced here and political space is created, occupied, or made more meaningful. Research for this project

NDI's Theory of Change

It is at the intersection of citizen voice, political space, and government accountability where politics is practiced, democratic skills are developed, and democratic practices are established and deepened



investigated both if and how programs' use of technology was impacting each of these dimensions, as well as the intersection of the three, because absent a connection between them, meaningful participation is stunted and democratic progress languishes.

> > > > >

CITIZEN VOICE

Citizen voice refers to citizens expressing their preferences, aggregating their interests, acting individually and collectively, and influencing public officials and public policy. It is synonymous with political participation, and can take the form of raising civic awareness, advocating for an issue, monitoring a political process, organizing debates, or simply voting. For citizen voice to be politically effective, citizens: 1) must understand ideas about citizenship, politics, and government; 2) will need knowledge to make decisions about policy choices and the proper use of authority; and 3) must possess the skills to channel demands to public officials and hold them accountable for responding.

Essential considerations of citizen voice when conducting citizen participation programs

Access to Information and Citizenship Competencies

Information enables citizens to make more informed political choices, contribute to public initiatives, and advocate for policy improvements on issues. Adequate, timely, and appropriate information about how politics is conducted and policies determined is a necessary precursor to effective political action, especially in developing democracies where lack of access to information has been a chronic barrier to effective citizen participation.

Technology has increased the quantity, quality, and availability of information to citizens in the public sphere delivered by the increasing availability of mobile, broadband, and internet access. But, for the quantity and quality of *participation* to increase, greater access to information requires citizens to have the skills to process and act upon that information and/or intermediary groups to facilitate citizens' engagement. An informed citizenry, while important and necessary for democratization is not sufficient, in and of itself, for political action to occur. Citizens need certain competencies in order move from passive receivers of information to participants in political life, including an understanding of the roles of public institutions, political parties, and citizens themselves. Additionally, a sense of agency and the ability to apply this knowledge and develop skills that allow them to make their needs and priorities known to the government, for example through signing a petition, attending a town hall meeting, contacting elected official, voting, or petitioning government institutions, are also necessary.

Politically active CSOs often provide opportunities for citizens to develop these competencies and many are increasingly using technology to do so. One such group that researchers met with is the Ugandan non-governmental organization Rwenzori Information Centers Network (RIC - NET), which uses a combination of online tools, community radio, local meetings, SMS polls, civic education, and in-person organizing to help villages identify critical issues, gather the necessary data or evidence to support specific claims, build support for policy goals through CSO alliances, and develop and carry out action plans that purposely involve community members in the campaign. In contrast, another CSO researchers met with in Uganda only provided detailed budget information to over 20,000 citizens. However, they found that citizens lacked the context to understand the information, its meaning for their community, or how they might impact it in some way. There were no clear channels for citizens to use the information to engage politically and they lacked the skills and experience to do so on their own. As one staff member put it, "we now realize that there is no lack of information, but there is too much, and it fuels apathy. ICTs are not going to make people more engaged".

Strength and Credibility

Effective engagement requires that citizens and CSOs demonstrate both strength and credibility in their political activities. Strength can be manifest in several ways, including through numbers, such as numbers of citizens or organizations involved in initiatives, coalitions, alliances, or networks, as well as through the ability to develop and implement long term political strategies. Likewise, credibility is gained when collective action initiatives demonstrate a legitimate constituency or represent strong public opinion; display expertise on issues of concern and a clear understanding of the political realities; and negotiate and propose solutions, rather than engage simply in opposition politics.

Technology can help build both strength and credibility by helping organizations inform, organize, and mobilize citizens more easily and cheaply than ever before. Organizations are able to communicate more information to more individuals at a lower cost, and transaction costs for citizens to engage with organizations are lowered, such as finding and joining organizations or donating money. These efficiencies in speed and cost that connection technologies afford amplify and streamline mobilization and organizing. Civil society organizations are using the internet and other technologies to fact-check, conduct research, and use social media to generate citizen interest and input. This tech-enabled organizing can increase the credibility and effectiveness of groups especially when they are recognized as honest brokers of information, particularly in environments where information is hard to obtain or distorted by government.

> > > > > POLITICAL SPACE

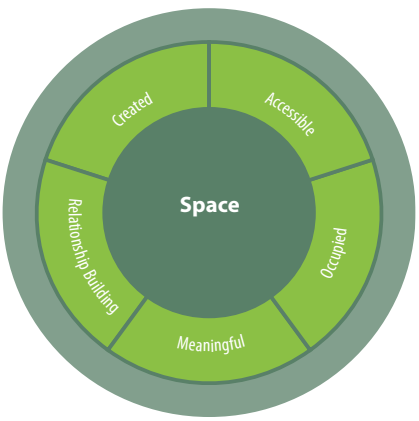
Political space refers to the avenues and opportunities or entry points that exist for citizens to express their voice and influence political processes and outcomes. The degree of political space that exists may be placed on a continuum from relatively open and inclusive to closed and exclusive.

Created, Accessible, and Occupied

Citizens can take advantage of existing space (e.g., voting in an election) or help create new spaces (e.g., issue advocacy campaigns or budget monitoring) where rights of assembly, expression, and association are exercised as a means of engaging government. Political space is considered accessible if citizens are able to express policy preferences without interference or harassment by government.

While space may be created by one set of actors that care about political openness, such as reform-minded politicians, human rights groups, and democracy and governance oriented CSOs, it inevitably needs to be occupied, or filled by citizens with tangible policy concerns requiring government responsiveness. Otherwise, it will close, slowing democratic progress. When space is closing or severely limited, citizens may make increasing demands for more space to express their views and advocate for their interests. This is made potentially much easier by the internet and digital technology.

Essential considerations of political space when conducting citizen participation programs



A global set of norms surrounding internet freedom, government openness, and transparency are helping legitimize citizen demands for access to information and avenues through which to influence government decisions. The internet has greatly increased the space where citizens can engage politically. Social media, in particular, is now routinely a way for citizens to hold political discussions that may not

be available in person where freedom of association and expression is curtailed. Similarly, blogs, online forums, online town halls and political debate forums are available at low cost with existing easy to use tools. Discussions that take place in person can be live streamed and broadcast inexpensively to a much larger audience online that can actively partake in the conversation via online chat and social media. The Citizen Security and Justice case study from NDI's work in Mexico provides examples of several of these approaches.

Parliaments are using technology to engage citizens by live streaming committee meetings, sharing draft legislation online, and enabling citizens to contact their legislatures directly. Local governments have used technology to expand citizen input into budgeting and expenditure processes. Moreover, the internet and social media in authoritarian countries serve as a virtual and vital public sphere for citizens to learn about political issues in the absence of other open public spheres that citizens could otherwise utilize and draw upon.[6]

In the Mexico and Burma case studies, NDI researchers found evidence to support this assertion: a virtual political sphere spurred citizens' political engagement. Even in closed political environments, technology is beginning to allow citizens to gather and share political information.

Harvard University's Archon Fung et al[7] further this notion and state:

"In non-democratic societies, then, the digitized public sphere will be dramatically more democratic in terms of who speaks and what they say than the public sphere without the Internet as long as it is difficult for authoritarians to control content on the Internet. As others in those societies come to recognize this quality, the digitized public sphere may indeed become more muscular, simply because pre-Internet non-democratic public spheres are so emaciated."

On the other hand, some evidence shows that a tech-empowered public can result in a significant backlash by authoritarian regimes imposing increased government regulations controlling access to the internet.[8] As citizens demand and claim political space online, there are concomitant efforts in many countries to control online environments. Intermediary liability laws, restrictions on expression online - including libel laws-, active censorship, surveillance, blocking of certain websites and social media spaces, even shutting down mobile networks and internet access partially or entirely are increasingly common in authoritarian regimes. Government controls of the internet and internet governance are growing concerns, as are controls of mobile networks.[9] In Uganda, for instance, during the grassroots protest walk-to-work campaign[10], the government directed internet service providers to block access to Facebook and Twitter and filtered mobile traffic for certain SMS keywords deemed incendiary. More recently there have also been a flurry of liability and libel laws

6 Farrell, Henry. 2012. The Consequences of the Internet for Politics. *Annual Review of Political Science* 15(1): 35-52). Reuter, Ora John and Szakonyi, David. Online Social Media and Political Awareness in Authoritarian Regimes. 2013. < http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2148690)>.

7 Fung, Archon, Hollie Russon Gilman, and Jennifer Shkabatur. "Six Models for the Internet+ Politics." *International Studies Review* 15.1 (2013): 30-47.

8 Deibert, Ronald, and Rafal Rohozinski, eds. 2010. " Access controlled: *The Shaping of Power, Rights, and Rule in Cyberspace*. The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts & London, England. Morozov, Evgeny "Whither Internet Control?." *Journal of Democracy* 22.2 (2011): 62-74; Howard, Philip N., Sheetal D. Agarwal, and Muzammil M. Hussain. "When do States disconnect their digital networks? Regime responses to the political uses of social media." The Communication Review 14.3 (2011): 216-232. Pearce, Katy E., and Sarah Kendzior. "Networked authoritarianism and social media in Azerbaijan." *Journal of Communication* 62.2 (2012): 283-298.

9 ibid

10 Walk-to-work was organized by activist groups, including Activists for Change (A4C), who organized mass citizen protests to the Ugandan government's perceived indifference to rising food and fuel prices.

implemented in authoritarian countries, which aim to control online content production and dissemination by citizens, in an effort to curtail and control citizen voice and reduce the political space available to citizens online.

Meaningful Interactions

For civic participation to take root and deepen democracy, interactions between citizens, civil society, political parties, and government must offer real opportunites to deliberate and influence decsions. For citizens, accessing information or being heard is important, but it's a far cry from being involved in decision making. Furthermore, a lack of meaningful spaces for citizens to engage public officials inexorably erodes participation, as they see little impact from their efforts.

> > > > > **In order to develop substantive working relationships, public officials must also want to engage citizens. Although this desire sometimes exists, the research found that, in many tech-driven programs, insufficient attention is devoted to working with public officials and civil society in non-technological ways in order to create conditions that provide incentives for such behavior.**

While social media and other online forums have facilitated the opening of political space, an increase in spaces for citizens to engage meaningfully with governing institutions remains largely aspirational. Citizens are able to more easily access information, communicate with public officials, and engage with each other, but substantive input into decision making remains elusive in many developing democracies. One reason for this is the increase in what has been variously termed "fake public participation"[11] or "pseudodemocracy"[12], in which governments - especially those seeking a degree of democratic legtitmacy, but not accountabilty - offer opportunites for citizens to comment upon, but not influence policies. Technology has augmented governments' abilites to offer this veneer of democracy. For example, undemocratic regimes can use technology to enable public access to vast amounts of politically insignificant data and proclaim it is proof of their open, democratic governance.

Relationship Building

One of the most enduring outcomes of effective citizen participation programs occurs when citizens and CSOs build relationships with public officials and find opportunities to collaborate in problem solving, rather than only filing complaints or making unreasonable demands.

Digital technologies are giving citizens the ability to communicate directly with public officials or through CSO intermediaries without being concerned about physical distance or logistical barriers. This can increase communication between citizens and government in policy making, but, in order to develop substantive working relationships, public officials must also want to engage citizens. Although this

11 Snider, J .H. 2010. The International Journal of Public Participation. 4(1). January 1, 2010.
12 Diamond, L. J., & Plattner, M. F. 2009. Democracy: A Reader. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press.

desire sometimes exists, the research found that, in many tech-driven programs, insufficient attention is devoted to working with public officials and civil society in non-technological ways in order to create conditions provide incentives for such behavior. Technology as a means for direct communication to public officials may therefore provide the illusion, but not the reality, of the kind of meaningful relationships which enhance political space. For example, research into the Uganda USpeak case, a tech-enabled way for citizens to contact their legislators directly, indicated an "inattentive(ness) to individual incentives and institutional imperatives," as Fung et al has put it.[13]

> > > > > GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountable government recognizes the needs and interests of citizens and works to advance public welfare. Public officials are subject to oversight and must answer for their actions so that government initiatives meet their stated objectives and are responsive to citizens. Citizen participation plays an important role in helping establish and maintain government accountability by organizing and demanding government transparency, predictability, and responsiveness. New and emerging democracies often suffer from an accountability deficit where government feels no need to account to citizens and where political processes are closed and arbitrary. This lack of accountability not only undermines democratic governance, it also impedes socio-economic development.

Transparency

Transparency, defined as the availability of information about how government conducts business, is a key prerequisite for oversight. As more governments embrace an "open data" approach, making government data

Essential considerations of government accountability when conducting citizen participation programs

available in machine-readable ways that ensure that the data can be analyzed and reused, citizen groups increasingly use such data to document the quality of government policies and programs related to health, education or elections. Where such data is not readily available, citizens have a role to play in both advocating for better access to information and in monitoring government behavior in an effort to systematically collect actionable data that can be used to hold government to account. Often, this data is compellingly mapped or presented in the form of infographics that depict a specific governance issue. Such initiatives that

13 Fung, Archon, Hollie Russon Gilman, and Jennifer Shkabatur. "Six Models for the Internet+ Politics." *International Studies Review* 15(1). 2013: 30-47

use mobile phones and internet platforms are showcased in both the Burma Election Tracker and Uganda Watch case studies in the next section.

The growing international parliamentary monitoring community that NDI is helping to develop through its Opening Parliament initiative uses digital technologies extensively. For instance, many parliamentary monitoring organizations (PMOs)[14] have created online mechanisms for citizens to comment on legislation or statements by members of parliament (MPs), annotate bills, and communicate with MPs either publically or privately. Some PMOs engage citizens in the monitoring process by allowing them to post evidence as to the veracity of an MP's statement or to monitor an individual MP's activities. Other PMOs conduct outreach that includes online meetings between MPs and civil society organizations to engage in debate on specific issues. In the case of monitoring constituency development funds or other funds that MPs are responsible for implementing, PMOs help citizens conduct social audits of development projects using mobile phones.

A notable trend in technology-enabled transparency programs is a blurring of the meaning between the technologies of open government data and the politics of open government. For example, in the course of research for this study, individuals with a technology focus were far more likely to define open government as access to government data, while many issue advocacy groups and civil society leaders complained that, despite access to more data that indicated governments were (perhaps) more transparent, they were no more open in the political sense of being more participatory, collaborative or accountable.

Political Will and Political Leverage

In many emerging democracies, accountability requires that public officials have the political will to make citizen needs and interests a priority. This is often difficult, since many politicians and public officials are accountable to other centers of power, such as political party leaders, financiers, tribal leaders, or an entrenched elite. Under these circumstances, citizens need to change the incentives and make it difficult for public officials to ignore the needs and interests of citizens. This requires citizens to have sufficient political power, or leverage, to influence officials to make policy changes or implement reforms. Using technology to shine a light on poor performance, illicit activities, or inappropriate government expenditures, for example, can form part of an effort to motivate officials to change. To achieve this, however, citizens also need clear objectives and an awareness of what levers can be used to bring about the desired change. Examples include: political process monitoring coupled with advocacy using mobile phones, grassroots monitoring of government expenditures using social media, or highlighting inadequate service delivery by analyzing and mapping relevant data.

Mobile technology, especially, allows citizens to document and report issues they see in their communities directly, often to public websites, but also as part of more systematic programs with established data collection, response, and follow-up procedures. However, as many citizen crowdsourcing programs have found, reporting irregularities and putting them online will not necessarily change any behavior absent a political strategy, including a cogent analysis and targeting of the relevant institutions.

13 Fung, Archon, Hollie Russon Gilman, and Jennifer Shkabatur. "Six Models for the Internet+ Politics." *International Studies Review* 15(1). 2013: 30-47

14 PMOs are "citizen-based groups [that] monitor or assess the functioning of parliaments or their individual members, often seeking to facilitate and promote public knowledge of, and participation in parliamentary processes." <http://www.ndi.org/files/governance-parliamentary-monitoring-organizations-survey-september-2011.pdf>.

Responsiveness and Capacity to Respond

Government accountability relies in part upon the creation of expected norms that public officials will be responsive to citizens' needs and policy concerns. This is an incremental process, with the initial steps occurring when precedents are established that citizens have a right to information about, and the opportunity to participate in, political processes, and public officials have a duty to respond. A key aspect of this process is that citizens and civil society organizations are able to target their requests to the appropriate public officials and institutions, analyze their capacity to respond, and formulate their demands accordingly. Failure to do so may create unreasonable demands and unnecessary adversity between civil society and public officials.

Citizens are using technology to more easily access information, such as the relative authority of different levels of government and the budgeting power of each, as well as gathering evidence towards specific policy goals. This allows, but does not guarantee, more informed and targeted political engagement. Governing institutions, in turn, are theoretically, able to provide the public with meaningful political information and to reach out to citizens for their input. Responsive institutions, so far found mainly in more mature democracies, are increasingly - if reluctantly, at times - engaging citizens more directly. However, in many emerging democracies the willingness and technical capacity to provide accurate data on government performance or engage citizens in policy making is lacking. Technology may have changed institutions' *ability* to respond to citizen demands but its mere presence has not fundamentally changed *actual* government responsiveness or performance. This dynamic was observed in all three countries in which case studies were conducted.

Photo by DigitalDemocracy, licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 20. http://www.flickr.com/photos/digitaldemocracy

2 EXPERIENCES FROM NINE PROGRAMS

NDI's researchers developed case studies and vignettes that explore questions, complexities, and outcomes associated with selected citizen participation programs that used technology. NDI designed the research to draw on multiple perspectives and data sources.

> > > > > **BURMA**

Case Study: Burma Election Tracker

A National Crowdsourcing Project and Interactive Website Used to Monitor and Report on the 2010 General Election

– Jared Ford, Lead Researcher

Country Context

Prior to the 2011-2012 democratic reforms and the subsequent opening of democratic space in Burma, citizens had an extremely limited political voice. Restrictions on political activity forced many democracy and human rights advocates to operate in exile from neighboring Thailand and other countries in the region, such as Indonesia and Singapore. However, this made it difficult for the exiled groups to coordinate information gathering, awareness raising, and advocacy efforts, as the activists resided in different places and lacked the capacity to effectively collaborate.

Background

Since 2006, NDI has provided support to Burmese democracy and human rights groups operating in exile to strengthen their efforts to advocate for greater international pressure on the Burmese government. At a regional conference in 2006 in Chiang Mai, Thailand, NDI convened key democracy and human rights actors in the region to develop and implement a common pro-democracy strategy regarding Burma. This led to a number of CSOs establishing the Burma Partnership (BP)[15] in order to consolidate and strengthen their voice. BP is a coalition of organizations from throughout the Asia-Pacific region which coordinates regional civil society groups in advocating for democracy and human rights in Burma. Following the conference, NDI provided technical assistance to improve coordination among BP partner organizations and build their capacity to conduct awareness raising and advocacy initiatives on human rights abuses. This assistance included communication training sessions to build staff competencies with internal collaboration tools including document management and online team calendars, as well as digital outreach through the use of Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and email newsletters.

Burma Partnership was the organization responsible for the operation of the Burma Election Tracker (BET), a national crowdsourcing project and interactive website which was created with NDI assistance and used to monitor and report on the 2010 general elections. BP spearheaded the Burma Election Tracker

15 Burma Partnership is comprised of the following working group members: Burmese Alliance Organizations: Forum for Democracy in Burma (FDB), Nationalities Youth Forum (NYF), and Students and Youth Congress of Burma (SYCB); Regional Solidarity Networks: Alternative ASEAN Network on Burma (Altsean-Burma), Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (Forum-Asia), Asia Pacific Solidarity Coalition (APSOC); and National Solidarity Coalitions: Solidaritas Indonesia untuk Burma (Indonesian Solidarity for Burma) (SIB), Free Burma Coalition-Philippines (FBC-Philippines), Burma Campaign Korea (BCK), Hong Kong Coalition for a Free Burma (HKCFB), People's Forum on Burma (PFB) (Japan).

project in collaboration with organizational networks inside Burma including the All Burma Federation of Student Unions (Foreign Affairs Committee), Generation Wave, All Burma Students Democratic Movement Organization, Network for Democracy and Development, Network for Human Rights Documentation – Burma, as well as with support from media organizations including Burma News International, Democratic Voice of Burma and Mizzima News. Through these networks, Burma Partnership collected reports of electoral fraud and human rights violations and published them on a public website.

In the lead-up to the elections in 2010, NDI also partnered with other CSOs, selected on the basis of their existing organizational capacity, networks within Burma, and their credibility and respect within Burma's democracy movement. These included the Network for Democracy and Development, Network for Human Rights Documentation – Burma, and Generation Wave. In addition to facilitating communication and collaboration between these partners, NDI helped them plan for targeted and efficient election information data collection, analysis and storage, as well as for minimizing group members' exposure to political monitoring and other digital risks through secure communication trainings.

Technology Use

Additionally, NDI supported the creation of a new interactive website, **www.burmapartnership.org**, in order to serve as a unified platform for coordination. The website provided links to the partner organizations' respective websites, contained a centralized database of contact information for Burmese activists, and included **advocacy toolkits**[16] and resources.

The use of online communication and collaboration tools enabled allied groups operating over a wide geographic area and with diverse networks inside Burma to develop a united approach and coordinated messaging when engaging international organizations and foreign governments regarding political developments in Burma, as well as in advocating for urgently needed reforms.

The 2010 elections provided an opportunity for BP to be increasingly influential in changing international perceptions about Burmese politics as the Burmese government had committed to holding free and fair elections to enhance legitimacy abroad. In advance of the elections, NDI assisted BP in creating the Burma Election Tracker, an online tool to monitor and map human rights abuses and electoral irregularities.

Activists from BP member organizations collected reports on political activities and government conduct through their networks in Burma and then transported them across the border to Chiang Mai in both paper and electronic formats. BP then gathered and published these reports on the BET website, including many incidents of electoral fraud and human rights violations. The website included an interactive map that displayed these reports geographically and enabled site visitors to understand both the depth and breadth of the reported incidents.

Impressions & Analysis

Participants in the most significant change exercise and interviews indicated that the **Burma Election Tracker**[17] project afforded the Burmese community and international observers a rapid snapshot of systematic abuses including reports of violence and intimidation, abuses of government power, interference with opposition campaigns, extensive control of information, and widespread fraud. In contrast to other media outlets covering the Burma elections, many of which did not have exhaustive

16 http://www.burmapartnership.org/tools-for-activists/
17 http://burmaelectiontracker.com

http://www.burmaelectiontracker.org/map

sources, the reports collected by the Burma Election Tracker represented a diversity of the population, covering a wide geographic area including both urban and rural areas. Participants suggested that this diversity and broad coverage served to illuminate the scale and scope of abuses and increased the representative nature and credibility of the project's conclusions. Moreover, unlike previous advocacy campaigns and reports which had highlighted the Burmese government's human rights and political prisoner abuses, information from the BET project was almost immediately available. Previous efforts weren't able to provide reports and analysis until several weeks to months after the incidents had occurred. The immediacy by which such information is shared is critical, as attention and interest may wane rapidly and both public opinion -and international pressure form quickly after an election.

BET's creative data visualization assisted in attracting the attention of international media outlets by making individual citizen reports compelling and highlighting patterns in quantity, type and location. In addition, the information displayed on the website strengthened both international organizations' and media's ability to critique the Burmese regime by providing concrete evidence of violations, resulting in more accurate, evidence-based statements from the international community denouncing the 2010 elections. Additionally, BP partner organizations reported that the process of collecting and publicizing data significantly raised awareness of rights surrounding elections - such as ballot secrecy, access to poll stations, and accurate and transparent counting - both among the organizations' networks in Burma and among the diaspora population, which helped change perceptions of the obligations of the Burmese government.

With a new interactive website and improved communication skills, Burma Partnership has been able to increase its profile with the media and international community and more effectively engage as a unified voice in events such as the annual ASEAN Civil Society Conference and other initiatives to raise awareness on human rights abuses in Burma.

Voice

Members of the media credited the Burma Election Tracker project with significantly increasing access to credible information from inside Burma for journalists, activists, and political leaders. In interviews with NDI researchers, local media organizations highlighted how BET moved reports of human rights violations from inside to outside of the country for regional and international observers and, through increased coverage of incidents in local and international media, improved the quantity and the quality of data on electoral fraud and human rights violations around the 2010 elections.

In this way, the Burma Election Tracker project and Burma Partnership served to aggregate and amplify citizens' voices. They aggregated reports from multiple groups so that independent Burmese news organizations, international news outlets, governments, and advocacy groups had first-person sources for their reporting, lending greater strength, credibility, and impact to BP's advocacy work. This also served to amplify the work of many BP member groups as their messages were streamlined and unified to reinforce common themes for greater impact.

The authoritativeness of border-based groups has often been challenged in the Burmese political context as not being representative of the challenges and issues of Burmese citizens inside the country. BP's data collection marked an improvement in the cross-border community's ability to include and amplify the voices of Burmese residents, thereby providing an alternate narrative to that of the government. Coordinated collection of evidence and direct communication with in-country reporters were important to increasing the representativeness and credibility of the cross-border community's messaging.

By using established internal communication networks within existing organizations to highlight human rights and political abuses, BP member organizations educated member activists on international norms and expectations regarding political rights and government conduct.

Individual Burmese citizens, who were interviewed by BET project members either by phone or in person as part of the original data collection process, highlighted an increased awareness of political rights including access to the ballot, elections that reflect the will of the people, and the ability of all candidates to freely contest. BET project members, through acting as human rights monitors and systematically transmitting reports out of the country using USB devices for secure data transmission, increased their constructive participation in the political process. This participation emphasized the role that citizens could play in holding their government accountable. Citizens with an awareness of their rights took part in documented acts of protest including the spoiling of ballots on election day and sending complaint letters to the President and MPs.

Participants in the most significant change exercise highlighted that coordination between disparate human rights and political rights monitoring organizations to systematically collect and digitize violations dramatically increased the breadth of coverage and strengthened working relationships amongst BET participating groups. These newly developed relationships and improved coordination set a strong precedent for future civil society collaboration on government monitoring and other advocacy projects. The website and use of social media tools expanded the number of recipients who had access to the information. Digitization enhanced the data integrity, shareability, and analytical outcomes of the individual reports. Issue experts were able to draw upon documented incidents to bolster their claims, and local and international journalists had accurate, timely, and specific information for their reporting, which helped to disperse the content more widely.

Space

In the previously closed political environment in Burma, the targeted use of technologies by activists created new spaces for citizens and CSOs to express their voice, as well as to allow them to better use the existing space to state their opinions, advocate, and monitor and report on government activity.

While these information-sharing approaches did not significantly improve interactions among opposition party members, civil society activists, and Burmese government officials, they provided opportunities for citizens to influence the wider political dynamic and the actions of international community actors, who were their primary target audience. However, information collection mechanisms within organizations, including secure data transmission techniques, were only available to citizens already involved with the monitoring and advocacy networks in use prior to the setup of BET, so were not widely accessible nor extensively used. In addition, given the closed political space, citizens within Burma were not exposed to the results of BET through local and government media, nor were they able to easily access the Internet.

Nonetheless, intermediaries, including independent news organizations who broadcast throughout Burma on TV and radio (e.g., Burma News International, Irrawaddy, and Mizzima News) were able to use the data in their reporting. Therefore, while some Burma residents gained access to the reporting conclusions, the vast majority did not. This lessened the project's influence on the Burmese public.

Accountability

In interviews with NDI researchers, civil society activists cited one outcome of the project as heightened citizen expectations for better performance by their government, including meeting international standards for electoral processes.

Members of the media and the international community increasingly turned to BET for information on Burma's political processes. International delegations synthesized these reports and developed evidence-based statements, including those issued by the US government and ASEAN governments, demanding free and fair elections and critiquing the electoral process.

Organizational leaders on the BET project stated that they came away from the initiative with a better understanding of which actors, both inside and outside of Burma, could respond to government actions and abuses and how better information would affect these responses. International human rights advocates, EU governments, and certain ASEAN governments responded with statements critical of the regime, while also viewing the election as an opportunity to engage.

Independent media representatives found the provision of specific data to be useful in their reporting. Media outlets became increasingly critical of the country's political processes, through heightened awareness of abuses and increased education on the national legal and policy framework. Increased access to information by journalists resulted in greater curiosity and demand for information from exile organizations.

According to participants in the most significant change exercise, during in the pre-election period the main opposition party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), chose to compete in the election even though it did not accept the recently written constitution, stating that the 2010 elections could therefore not be legitimate. Over time, with citizens and CSOs gathering information on electoral fraud and human rights violations and applying pressure on the opposition parties to take a stronger position against the legitimacy of the elections, NLD grew more opposed to participating and ultimately boycotted the 2010 election in order to further reduce the legitimacy of the process. NLD often relied on the exile community, and BET information specifically, for evidence of violations and cited this in justifying their decision to boycott. This demonstrates how efforts by citizens and CSOs were able to build power, apply pressure, and influence the behavior of NLD

leadership in their favor. The civil society organizations interviewed stated that the ability of activist CSOs to widely disseminate their findings affected the incentives of Burma's repressive regime and changed citizens' expectations of government. The strategic use of technology in this context was cited as instrumental to changing expectations related to the Burmese government's accountability on human rights violations and the ability to conduct free and fair elections. These experiences will help the Burmese CSOs involved better target their future advocacy actions and adjust strategies accordingly.

Conclusions

The BET initiative afforded the Burmese democracy community and international observers a snapshot of systematic abuses during the 2010 elections, such as widespread manipulation of advance votes, forced voting, and intimidation. In contrast to other websites covering the elections, the BET project reports provided an aggregated and categorized picture, representing a wide geographical area in Burma, including from urban to rural areas.

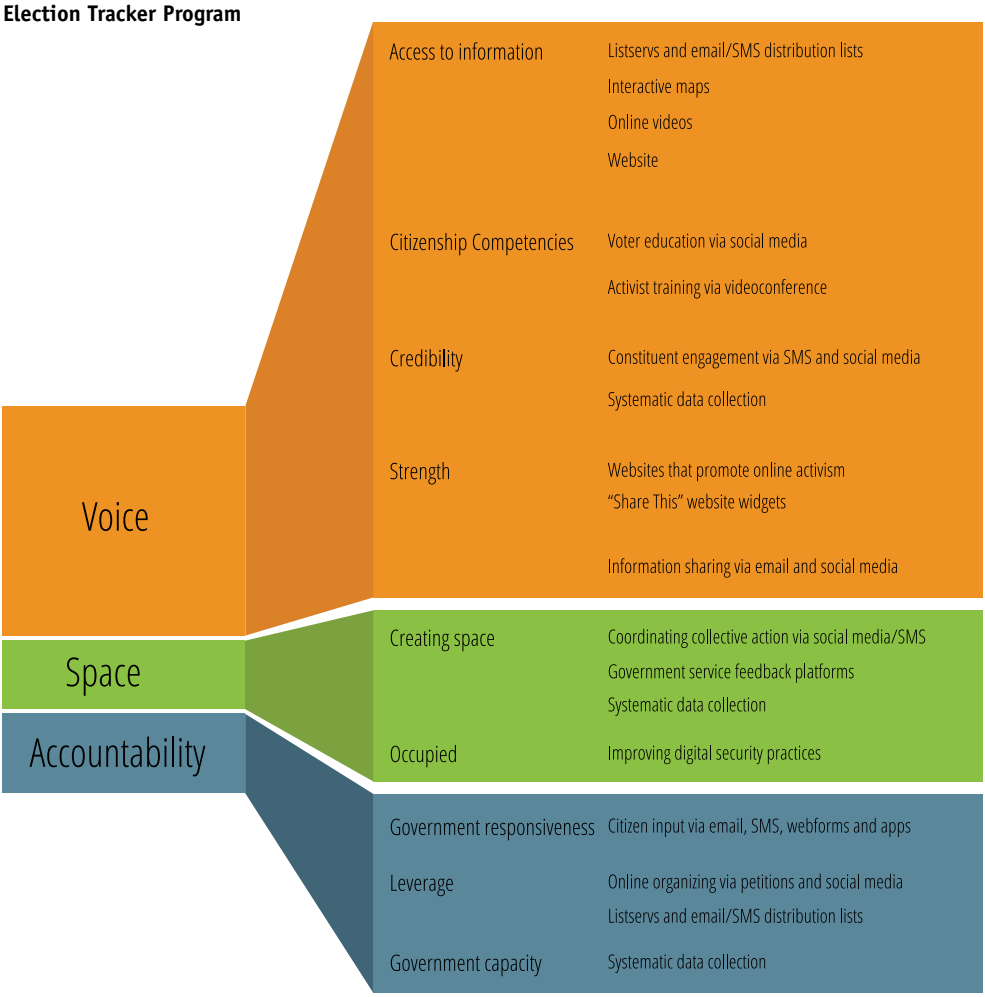
In addition, the use of digital communication tools in advocacy helped strengthen the arguments of human rights and democracy CSOs. Burma Partnership developed and used an interactive website that served as the backbone for regular online communications. Social media tools, including Facebook and Twitter, as well as digital newsletters, improved content distribution. CSOs utilized project collaboration tools to support internal communication and coordination with other partners. Post-project evaluations found that groups that collaborated on BET had an expanded sense of how to collaborate and meet collective advocacy goals, as well as an instrumental use of secure data collection and online reporting websites.

BET project participants reported that, with additional preparation and foresight, they would have made several changes to improve key components of the project. Specifically, they highlighted that increased advertising and promotion of the website may have led to even greater coverage of the project's conclusions and that enlarging the scope of partners for data collection could have improved the diversity and quality of the analysis. For example, BET reports did not capture data from the Bangladesh-based Burmese organizations, Burmese Diaspora groups, contacts along the Chinese and Thai borders (beyond Mae Sot), or smaller independent exiled media groups and NGOs. Additionally, project participants suggested that: improved standardization of questionnaires used in data collection would have improved the quality and comprehensiveness of the data; online map visualizations could have included additional characteristics (source, lower level geography); and increased staffing on the project, especially for translation, would have increased publication speed.

Overall, the BET initiative collected and analyzed large amounts of information, presented it in an accessible format, and disseminated the conclusions to a variety of actors. The BET website and other digital communication tools provided valuable evidence for media and related advocacy efforts. The credibility of the BET member organizations was also enhanced due to having information stored online in a fully transparent manner.

Due to these programs and initiatives, NDI's partners are better positioned to play a more meaningful role in Burma's democratization. They've collected substantial data, forged relationships, built coalitions, and learned how to communicate with a variety of targeted actors including journalists, international governments, international and regional NGOs, and Burmese citizens. These skills and experiences are necessary in a fast-changing environment and have been enhanced through the course of these programs.

Dimensions of Citizen Participation and Technology use in the Burma Election Tracker Program



> > > > > MEXICO

Country Context

Although Mexico's democracy has developed significantly, there are few established mechanisms for public participation in the policy-making process and low levels of participation from civil society groups, especially traditionally marginalized groups such as people with disabilities and women. Organized crime and violence have also generated serious challenges to democratic institutions in Mexico. Unsuccessful efforts to improve citizen security weaken public confidence in democratic institutions, as repeated public surveys in Mexico have shown. According to the Tenth National Study on Perception of Citizen Insecurity in Mexico released in June 2013, 29 percent of Mexicans believe that it is very dangerous to help police in their city. According to the same poll, more than 25 percent of Mexicans agree that citizens should take justice into their own hands as a measure to combat insecurity.

Within this context, on July 1, 2012, Mexico held presidential, federal legislative and municipal elections. Following 12 years of National Action Party (PAN) administrations, the Institutional Revolutionary Party's (PRI) candidate, former Mexico State Governor Enrique Peña Nieto, won the presidential election by a margin of approximately 7 percent over the next candidate, Andrés Manuel López Obrador of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD). Some of the PAN's electoral losses - the party came in third in the presidential and congressional races - reflected waning popular support for President Felipe Calderón's national security strategy. The arrival of newly incoming federal, state, and municipal officials provides marginalized populations and civil society groups with a unique opportunity to position themselves and their issues and generate opportunities for potential political reforms.

NDI has been implementing programs in Mexico since 1991, when it worked with Mexican election observers to organize the country's first parallel vote tabulation or quick count.[18] NDI has also assisted Mexican CSOs to conduct quick counts at the state and national levels; supported the election monitoring efforts of Mexican civic groups, including Civic Alliance; sponsored international observation delegations; and conducted international pre-election assessment missions.

In 2004, NDI established a field office in Mexico to help foster more accountable, responsive, transparent and effective political parties; strengthen the capacity of women candidates, party activists and leaders, and elected officials to compete in elections and govern effectively; and increase the capacity of civic groups to engage and collaborate with political parties and governments in policy formulation.

Case Study: Citizen Security and Justice Reform

CSO Coalition Enhanced by an Interactive Website and Social Media

– Jared Ford and Koebel Price, Lead Researchers

Background

The prevalence of organized crime and violence in certain regions of Mexico poses a serious challenge to democracy. Surveys show that unsuccessful efforts to improve citizen security and the judicial system weaken public confidence in democratic institutions. In response, NDI has worked with civic groups interested in citizen security and justice issues to maximize their role and impact in decision making on security and justice policy

The run-up period to the July 2012 elections created an opportunity to advocate on security and justice issues with candi-

18 A quick count is an independent verification of election results using a statistically based random sample.

dates for federal office and to engage the public in these efforts. In the states of Baja California and Chihuahua, NDI conducted a series of outreach meetings with civil society representatives to discuss the idea of partnering with local groups to advocate for security and justice reforms, request local contacts, and gauge interest in collaboration with NDI. Working with national CSO partner ***Renace***[19], NDI also organized workshops designed to provide local CSOs with information on judicial reform, in which participants learned about the history of the reform process, its key elements and objectives, pending legislation, and implementation priorities. In addition, NDI helped organize public forums focused on citizen security and justice reform to inform citizens about national advances and challenges in these areas and the interrelationship between them. The events featured panels of political party representatives who presented their positions on security and justice and answered questions from citizen participants that helped to differentiate their party's policy preferences.

This groundwork helped NDI identify potential partner organizations in both states and the Institute assisted these groups in forming coalitions to advocate for security and justice reforms and to raise awareness of the issues, and bring together activists, issue experts, and citizens. In Baja California, NDI worked with the Tijuana-based Citizen Coalition for Public Security (*Consejo Ciudadana por la Seguridad Pública,* CCSP) and in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, NDI partnered with Juarenses for Peace (*Juarenses por la Paz* or *Grupo Deutéra, AC*). Program activities included convening dialogues with federal legislative candidates and citizens, launching and maintaining web platforms and social media campaigns to provide information, advocacy training for civic groups, and constituent outreach training for elected officials.

Technology Use

In collaboration with *CitiVox*, a Mexican technology firm, NDI assisted its partners in creating the **Security and Justice interactive website**[20], providing a unified campaign homepage with the ability to share resources and interact with the public. Each state coalition also had an individual page, which connected to their social media campaign. This approach was chosen for several reasons. First, NDI and its partner organizations had determined that success depended upon the ability to inform, engage and organize larger numbers of citizens. However, traditional media outlets were not providing coverage and, due to the very security and justice issues they were concerned about, citizens were frightened to meet to discuss the issues in person or to place demands upon candidates or public officials. Secondly, the groups' wanted to create national level awareness and pressure for security and justice dialogue and reform. The coordinated use of the unifying national campaign homepage and social media tools was seen as providing the best opportunity to achieve these goals.

With support from NDI and CitiVox, the coalitions were guided through the process of creating an online campaign presence, including developing content on existing legal frameworks for citizen security and experts' analysis on deficiencies and potential reforms. Local coalition groups advertised the Security and Justice program and website using television and radio, as well as on Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter.

Leading up to the July 2012 elections, the Security and Justice website used a three-step approach that culminated in public discussions on security and justice reform with citizens, issue experts, and local authorities. Initially, the site provided online deliberative space where citizens could share their opinions on security and justice themes. During the second step,

19 http://renace.org.mx
20 http://www.seguridadconjusticia.org

citizens posted questions to be addressed by candidates. Citizens could submit up to three questions online and then vote for the best questions from those submitted by all users. Finally, candidates discussed the three questions receiving the most votes during filmed public dialogues with citizens. The website then featured the different videos so that voters could make side-by-side comparisons of the candidates. The Citizen Security and Justice Reform program's social media outlets provided additional space for dialogue where citizens could comment on content posted.

Impressions and Analysis

NDI staff, local partners, and key informant interviewees all cited a disparate, disorganized civil society that did not interact with citizens as a barrier to Mexico's democratic development and highlighted the Security and Justice program's ability to bring groups together in coalition around a common agenda as one of the most important outcomes. The groundwork laid by NDI's work with CSOs in each of the states prior to the inception of the Security and Justice program was seen as essential to establishing mutual trust and defining a common political agenda. The use of the interactive website and social media unified these groups under a single campaign umbrella with defined strategy and specific goals, fostering increased cooperation and political engagement that partners cited as strengthening their abilities to impact their issues. Partners groups noted several additional changes they attribute to the program, including public officials' recognition that, due to the program's ability to increase public awareness and activism and the fact that they would be publicly evaluated on their work in this area, they needed to be better informed and more engaged with citizens on security and justice matters. This has resulted in increased dialogue between citizens, political party leaders and elected officials.

Voice and Space

Research highlighted several encouraging outcomes of this campaign. First, the online spaces it created offered a safe place for citizens to access information, express their opinions, and listen to each other's concerns and proposals on security issues and politics - something potentially quite dangerous to do in person. The program enabled citizens to stay informed about security and justice matters and to aggregate and prioritize their concerns and express them to candidates and political leaders, thereby increasing the strength and credibility of their voices. Additionally, the program was cited by both partner organizations and key informant interviewees as having played an important role in informing a broader set of actors about security and justice problems and potential solutions, particularly in light of a lack of coverage by the mainstream media. The business community, larger civil society, and local police were all seen as being more informed and engaged due to the program's activities and as adding additional, important stakeholder voices to the dialogue on security and justice reforms.

Accountability

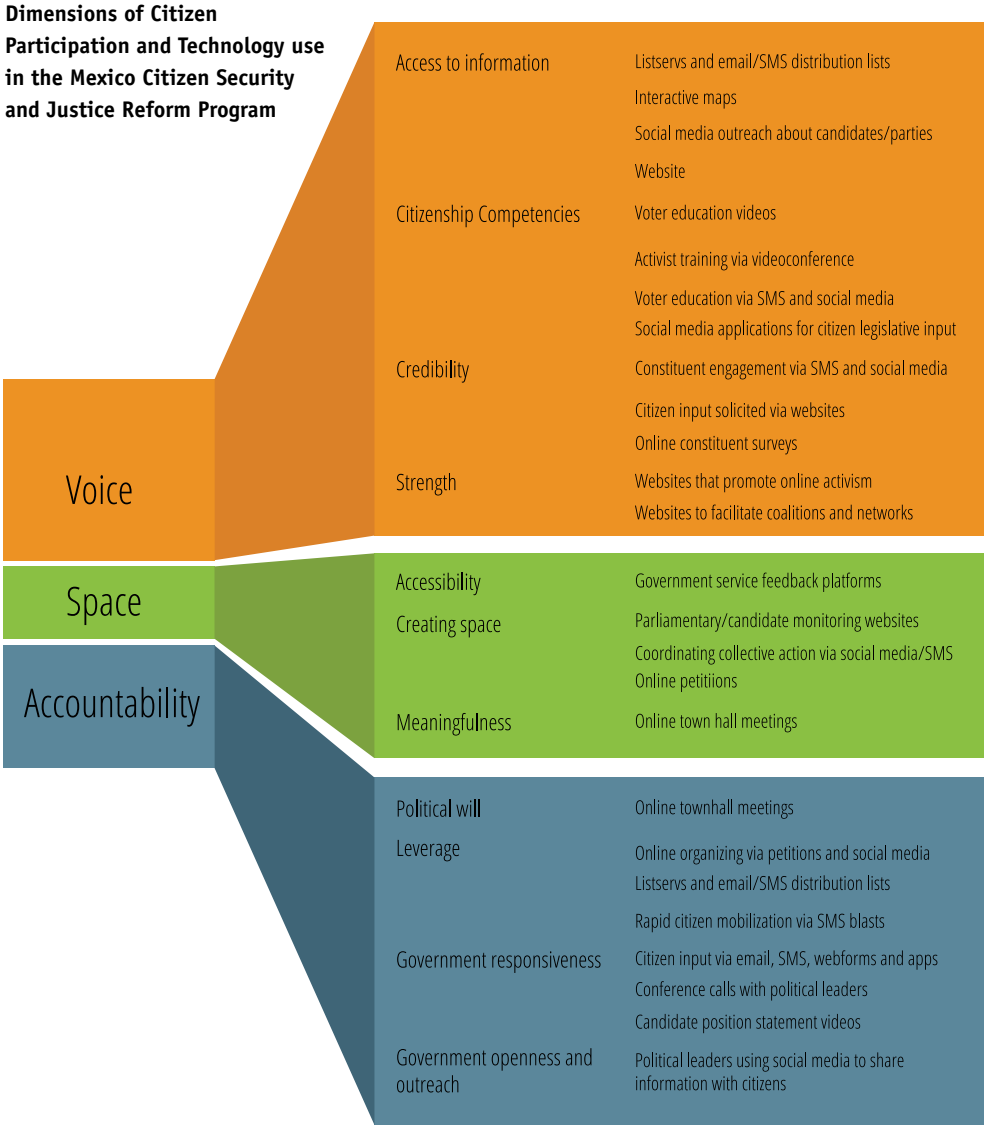
The program's use of technology to inform citizens, who in turn engaged candidates with their concerns and demands, helped establish expectations of greater government accountability on security and justice matters. For example, the recordings of candidates' statements on specific policies are now being used to provide a basis for holding those elected accountable by using the information in legislative scorecards on security and justice issues. The Security and Justice site and social media are still being actively used by CSOs and citizens and this continues to build both public understanding of these complex issues and demands for public officials to take appropriate action.

Conclusions

The Security and Justice Coalitions put

technology at the center of their strategy to incrementally build issue awareness, citizens' capacities, and political power. The coalitions' approach interwove creative multimedia information campaigns, issue expertise, and offline actions to provide citizens the opportunities develop the knowledge, skills, unity, and commitment around a shared vision that is necessary for meaningful collective action. The groups involved in the program noted that while NDI's assistance in technology training was important, the Institute's work in laying the groundwork for CSOs to coalesce around a common agenda was a necessary catalyst for bringing diverse CSOs from various regions together in a coalition that otherwise would not have existed. In addition, NDI's assistance in conducing policy analysis and devising advocacy and citizen engagement strategies were seen as instrumental to the coalitions' effectiveness in the Security and Justice campaign. In this way, the non–technology aspects of NDI's technical assistance were both a necessary precursor to the coalition's use of technologies and central to its success.

Dimensions of Citizen Participation and Technology use in the Mexico Citizen Security and Justice Reform Program



Case Study: 2% and More Women in Politics

Technology-Enabled Coalition Campaign for Gender Equity

– Jared Ford and Koebel Price, Lead Researchers

Background

Mexican women made political gains in 2012 by securing a growing number of seats in the country's national legislature, where they now account for more than 36 percent of the members. One development that helped move women ahead at the national level was a campaign to promote enforcement of a provision in the federal election code that designates 2 percent of federal political party funding for women's leadership training. Many parties had been ignoring the requirement and instead using the earmarked funds for other expenses.

The national level campaign began with a coalition called "2% and More Women in Politics". The coalition was made up of women from all of Mexico's major political parties, the National Institute for Women (INMUJERES)[21], academics, and civic activists, including women's empowerment coalitions from many sectors. In the early stages of the campaign, NDI staff facilitated a series of meetings with this diverse group of coalition members to discuss and evaluate several proposals in order to reach consensus on a package of reforms to share with the election commission.

Technology Use

The campaign had both a tight timeline due to the electoral calendar and very limited resources – primarily a small amount of NDI staff time and volunteers from the coalition. This led NDI and coalition members to a strategy that relied heavily upon the use of technologies to conduct outreach and education activities, bring media attention to the issue, and communicate their demands en masse. NDI helped the coalition develop a message and media strategy, create a social media campaign, and circulate an online petition calling for passage of reforms by Mexico's federal election commission, the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE). The coalition used Twitter, Facebook, email outreach, and online petition tools to bolster support for the reform.

Impressions and Analysis

In conversations with coalition leadership, they believed that the use of technology tools enabled the group to quickly establish a campaign, expand the number of people engaged, and grow the coalition members' capacity to organize and apply direct pressure on the Electoral Council for administrative rule changes in the limited window of opportunity that existed before the elections.

The IFE unanimously approved the reforms in July 2011 and set clear guidelines for how parties could and could not spend their training funds. The guidelines also required parties to submit an annual plan to the IFE for how they planned to spend money designated for programs to empower women political leaders. The July 1, 2012 elections saw historic gains for women's representation in national politics, with 184 seats in the 500-seat national legislature going to women candidates, representing a 5 percent increase from the previous elections. In part, this increase can be attributed to parties prioritizing financial and training resources for their women leaders.

The 2% and More Women in Politics coalition is continuing to work with the IFE to help monitor enforcement of the new federal reform guidelines.

21 An institution of the Mexican Federal Government responsible for directing national policy to achieve equality of opportunity between women and men through institutionalizing and mainstreaming gender in Mexican state actions.

Following this achievement on the national level, NDI and the National Institute for Women developed a toolkit, **2% and More Women in Politics: An Advocacy Experience to Share**[22], with a detailed guide on how to organize an advocacy campaign. The guide included information on current legislation as well as advocacy techniques developed by the 2% coalition.

Voice

The coalition used social media to bring in new voices and connect like-minded activists, many of whom had previously been unaware of the support their issue had. The campaign used various media, including radio, journals, social media, face-to-face meetings, and roundtables to provide issue education, explaining to citizens the meaning of the "2%" campaign. Through these methods the campaign reached a wider audience that, in turn, generated a larger, better informed base of support. This community, now well-connected through digital media, demonstrated its increasing strength and credibility as an aggregator of citizens' concerns through online petitions, face-to-face meetings, and rallies.

Space

Given Mexico's few mechanisms for public participation and low levels of participation by women, the use of online tools and social media created new spaces and opportunities for coalition members and interested citizens to meet, share information, and strategize. This furthered the campaign's goals and enhanced activists' abilities to replicate this process elsewhere. For example, women party members raised awareness within their own parties, and promoted the new techniques of targeted outreach using digital media including Twitter, Facebook, online petitions, and email. Coalition leadership also highlighted the campaign's role in increasing interactions between party officials and members, providing greater transparency of party politics and creating the potential to further include citizens in decision making.

Accountability

The online campaign and visibility it generated helped the coalition to connect with and advocate directly to the IFE counselors, who were the key decision makers. These efforts were boosted by connecting online activities with offline actions and a campaign strategy that was time-bound and targeted, had a clear message, and took advantage of pre-election political conditions that were ripe for reform.

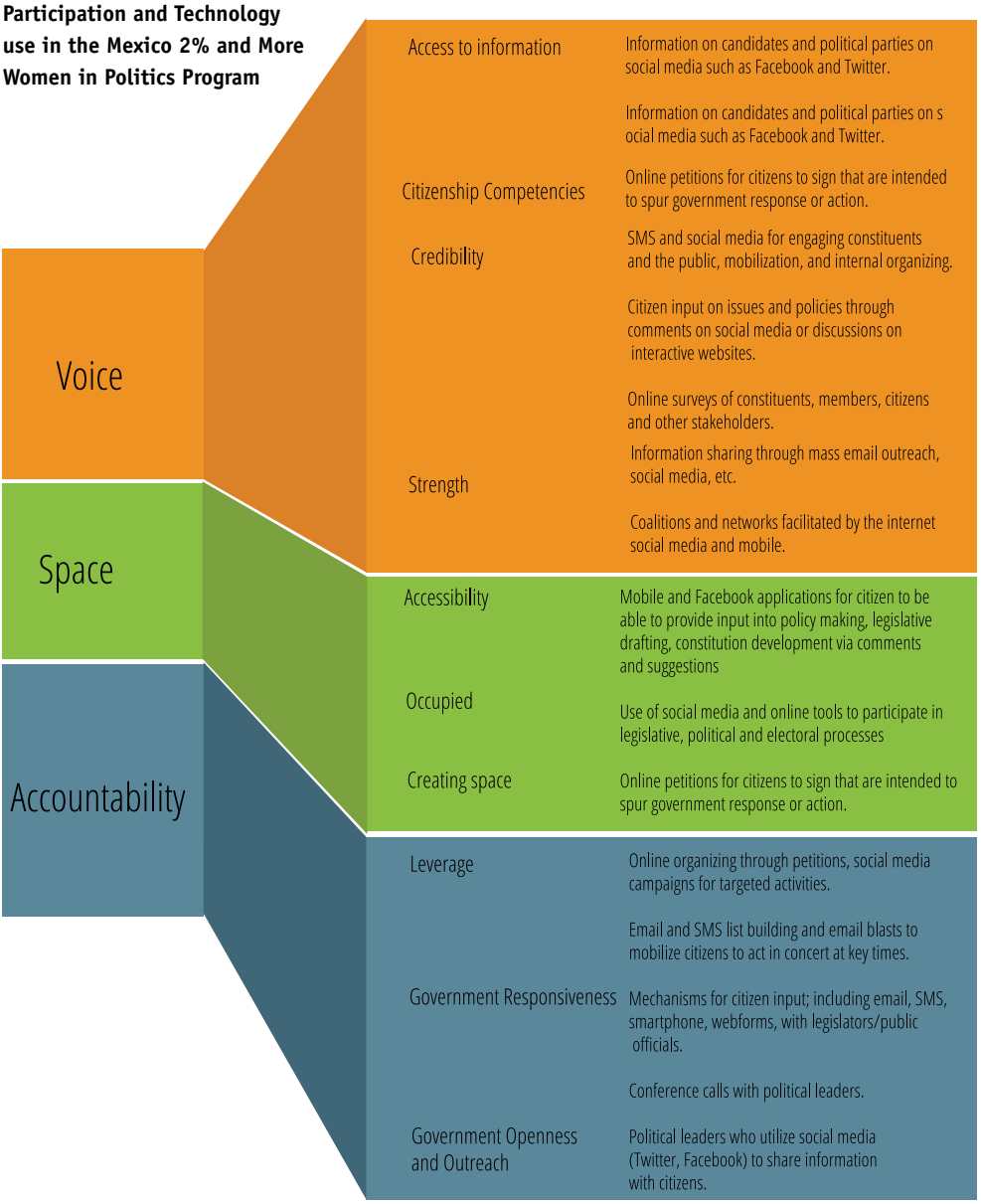
Conclusions

NDI's non-technology assistance to the coalition was cited as an important factor by both coalition leadership and Institute staff working on the program. They stated that women from multiple parties (with different ranks and ideologies) would likely not have come together without the

22 http://www.redpartidos.org/files/guia_incidencia_2_y__mujeres_en_politica_final.pdf

Institute acting as a neutral convener. Without support from across the political spectrum, the success of the 2% and More campaign would have been unlikely. Additionally, NDI's role in facilitating the coalition's work in developing a realistic set of recommended policy reforms to share with the election commission was also seen as providing an important balance between high aspirations and realistic possibilities, which was especially important since the coalition brought together more cautious party members with civic activists who wanted more significant change. These interventions on non-technological matters laid the foundation for the rapid, technology-savvy campaign's success.

Dimensions of Citizen Participation and Technology use in the Mexico 2% and More Women in Politics Program



> > > > > UGANDA

Country Context

Once hailed as a reformer and credited with stabilizing Uganda and putting it on a path toward development and economic growth, President Yoweri Museveni's reputation has been tarnished by rampant corruption, human rights violations, and backsliding on key development indicators. Information from Afrobarometer and other sources indicates that many Ugandans have become disillusioned with the state of democracy in their country, and attendance at community-level meetings has gone from highest to the lowest in the region.[23] A deeply entrenched culture of impunity means that political leaders have little expectation that they will be held accountable for their actions. Ugandans feel disempowered, fearful about using traditional channels for participation, and cynical that attempts to voice their opinion will result in change. Citizens have become skeptical about their ability to influence politics and fearful of the possible consequences of speaking out against policies imposed by those in power.

While political space in Uganda has been closing, infrastructure for technology has been improving and -somewhat paradoxically- citizens have expressed increased demand for democracy and an interest for more opportunities to interact with government on issues of concern.[24] In addition, there is a widely held belief that an increase in organized civic engagement is a necessary element for deepening Uganda's democratization. In an attempt to address these issues, donors have been using the country as a testing ground for technologies aimed at improving access to government information in the hopes that it will spur greater citizen involvement in politics. Myriad programs have deployed interactive websites, mobile phones, social media, and crowdsourcing tools. Use of these tools is intended to increase citizen participation in service delivery, human rights reporting, and political processes such as elections, budget monitoring, and constituent relations. While the various programs have different goals and methods, they hold in common the use of technology and of the goal of increasing communication between citizens and public officials, and improving transparency in their specific sector or subject. Research was not conducted into the theories of change behind all such programs in Uganda, but it is reasonable to infer that communication and transparency are focused upon as necessary steps on the pathway to government accountability, not ends unto themselves. Despite these numerous examples, little is known about whether or why the use of these technologies has been effective in that regard.

In interviews with NDI staff, CSO and international non-governmental organization (INGO) leadership, it was mentioned repeatedly that while connecting and organizing people using technology is imperfect, it offers promise that physically organizing individuals in Uganda does not. Difficult logistics and poor infrastructure, both in Kampala and in rural areas, lack of experienced personnel and funds, and low levels of existing trust and self–organizing amongst Ugandan citizens were all cited as barriers to more traditional organizing that might be alleviated through strategic use of technology. Another suggestion by interviewees was that younger, more educated, and tech-savvy individuals who are impatient about how Ugandan democracy works but want it to get better are choosing technology tools as a quicker and more direct means to make things happen and that this offers an opportunity,

23 Mattes, Robert. "Understanding Citizens Attitudes to Democracy in Uganda", 2010. Afrobarometer Working Paper 124.

24 As defined by an index developed by Afrobarometer, in which "demand" or "commitment" shows respondents not only prefer democracy but also reject three non-democratic alternatives: military rule, presidential rule (without recourse to a legislature), and one-party rule.

however minor, for change in an otherwise stagnant political system.

NDI began working in Uganda in 2003, supporting parliamentary caucuses to develop a new electoral framework. The program continued in 2004 and 2005 with a focus on providing technical assistance to local CSOs preparing to monitor the national elections and CSOs in the north attempting to broaden citizen participation. In 2006, NDI began working to encourage greater collaboration between women's CSOs and MPs and assisted their efforts to establish a common women's legislative agenda.

Beginning in 2009, NDI piloted three systems to better connect MPs with their constituencies: the parliamentary liaison system (PLS), the parliamentary call system (PCS) and USpeak, one of the case studies presented here. The PLS trained staff members to conduct mobile office hours for MPs and advanced the widespread adoption of constituency offices and personnel across parliament.[25] The PCS leveraged the popularity, accessibility, and potential for promoting political participation through mobile phones in Uganda and created a voice and text messaging system. The PCS system enabled citizens to inexpensively communicate with their MPs, and it produced a constituent casework tracking database.

In the run-up to the February 2011 elections, NDI partnered with Ugandan CSOs to implement a 14-month program to encourage voter confidence in Uganda's electoral process and institutions through voter education and election reporting via the **UgandaWatch**[26] initiative, also presented here as a case study.

Case Study: USpeak

An SMS and Web-Based Constituent Engagement and Case Tracking Platform

– Koebel Price, Lead Researcher

Background

The executive branch of the Ugandan government led by President Yoweri K. Museveni has quieted civil society, parliament, local government, the judiciary, traditional and religious institutions, and, to a lesser extent, the media, using a combination of patronage and intimidation to monopolize power. Uganda's weakening institutions are failing to effectively deliver services and meet citizens' basic needs. Weak leadership and factional fighting within the majority National Resistance Movement (NRM) and, to a lesser extent, the opposition, combined with a pervasive patronage system that rewards loyalty to political leaders over loyalty to constituents contributes to a meager relationship between legislators and citizens. MPs are perceived overwhelmingly by constituents to represent only the lawmakers' personal interests, reinforcing a system of patronage politics MPs simultaneously deride.

While parliament has enjoyed significant support from the donor community, aimed at strengthening the body's legislative and oversight functions, support for improving the parliament's representational capacities and the conduct of constituency activities remains weak. Yet, according to research conducted by the African Legislatures Project[27], good representation of, and strong relationships with constituents are the strongest predictors of whether an MP in Africa, and Uganda specifically, will be re-elected.

25 A 2012 survey, conducted by NDI, revealed that over 80 percent of MPs had established constituency offices with staff.

26 http://www.ugandawatch.org

27 The African Legislatures Project website has developed a range of quantitative and qualitative measures of legislative performance so that scholars and practitioners have a method for assessing and comparing the development of individual legislatures in relation to one another and over time. http://www.africanlegislaturesproject.org/about

Currently in Uganda, MPs make grand promises to voters during the campaign season to fix local problems but lack follow through after an election. The representational and constituency service roles of an MP focus on visits to weddings and funerals and financial contributions to individual private needs - despite the existence of a Constituency Development Fund. This is driven both by constituent demand for MPs to play this role and by the failure of MPs to adequately explain the powers of parliament to citizens and to use these powers to address constituent needs.

Many citizens rarely see their representatives outside of elections, and most do not know how to contact them. Though Ugandan citizens want to be involved in the political process, they have very few avenues through which they can engage with the parliament or the national government. Failure to change the nature of communication between citizens and MPs continues to undermine parliament as an institution.

> > > > > **The USpeak tool allows constituents to share their views and request information on issues from MPs by text message, voicemail, or by leaving a message with the NDI-managed USpeak call center that handles 23 of the most widely spoken languages[28] in the country. USpeak then aggregates the reports and requests by issue, which allows MPs to track the information, including number of contacts and types of issues, and compare them to the number of messages received by other lawmakers on these issues.**

Technology Use

USpeak is an SMS- and web-based constituent engagement and tracking platform that provides a mechanism for citizens to communicate with their representatives using SMS and helps lawmakers recognize citizens' needs and interests.

The USpeak tool allows constituents to share their views and request information on issues from MPs by text message, voicemail, or by leaving a message with the NDI-managed USpeak call center that handles 23 of the most widely spoken languages[28] in the country. USpeak then aggregates the reports and requests by issue, which allows MPs to track the information, including number of contacts and types of issues, and compare them to the number of messages received by other lawmakers on these issues.

Each MP has sole access to his or her inbox, which sorts the messages into three categories - opinions, requests for information, and requests for action - and allows MPs to mark the cases as pending or closed, so they can track the casework in their districts. The web-based tool permits MPs to stay in touch with their constituents anywhere an internet connection is available. An interactive voice response system (IVR)[29] is also available to disseminate multiple messages and deliver announcements via digital audio. NDI promoted the program with radio spots, billboards, and direct marketing efforts.

28 There are over 40 languages spoken in Uganda.

29 Interactive voice response (IVR) is a technology that allows a computer to interact with humans through the use of voice and keypad tones. In telecommunications, IVR allows customers to interact with a company's host system via a telephone keypad or by speech recognition, after which they can service their own inquiries by following the IVR dialogue. IVR systems can respond with prerecorded or dynamically generated audio to further direct users on how to proceed. IVR applications can be used to control almost any function where the interface can be broken down into a series of simple interactions. IVR systems deployed in the network are sized to handle large call volumes.

A partnership between NDI, **Gov2U**[30], Columbia University, the multi-donor **Democratic Governance Facility**[31], and the Ugandan parliament created USpeak so that MPs could gather information from constituents, organize reports, and set priorities for responses. The system is designed to help MPs overcome some of the challenges related to limited resources and lack of full-time staff support. In 2012, USpeak was piloted as a large scale means of communication between constituents and their MPs with low cost, easy to use mobile technology.

A randomized lottery was used to select 110 of the 350 directly-elected MPs[32] for the USpeak pilot. NDI conducted a baseline survey of MPs[33] so that the Institute and the Columbia University researchers could test the impact of the USpeak system on attitudes and behaviors of MPs and Ugandan citizens over the course of the program.

The Institute, in partnership with Columbia University, set up a data center to track, analyze and evaluate usage of the USpeak system and test various approaches to increase participation. USpeak has been promoted with radio advertisements, billboards, and face-to-face marketing, and systems were developed to gauge the effectiveness of each. In September 2012, a test of face-to-face marketing demonstrated increased interest in, and use of the program, but usage rates waned in subsequent months. The most successful marketing so far proved to be sending text messages to locally elected youth councilors telling them how to contact their youth MPs. Ten thousand marketing messages resulted in the five youth MPs receiving approximately 600 total messages over a three-week period. Each youth MP received more messages in these three weeks than any other single MP had in the previous 10 months, despite airing 24,000 USpeak radio advertisements.

Data center analysis has also revealed issues deemed critical to expanding USpeak usage: citizens knowing how to use SMS on a phone; knowing what issues are of interest and important to constituents; and knowing whether a constituent is part of wider group or organization that wants to petition their MP.

Impressions and Analysis

The USpeak system was still being tested and adjusted at the time NDI developed this case study. Through call-back surveys of USpeak users and meetings with civil society and participating MPs, data is being gathered that should result in continued adjustments that, hopefully, will increase the heretofore limited use and impact of the USpeak system.

Voice and Space

USpeak has created virtual spaces for citizens to express their voice, state their opinions, and - to a lesser extent - interact with public officials. Although constituent calls to MPs' personal cell phones still vastly outnumber USpeak contacts, the program has generated some individual citizen texts, calls to MPs, inquiries for information on budgets or other processes. While

30 Gov2U is a European NGO specializing in the development of ICT products that help enhance governance and democracy. Gov2U created the original USpeak system and remains committed to supporting its development and adoption in the Ugandan Parliament. Website: http://www.gov2u.org

31 The Democratic Governance Facility (DGF) is a multi-donor funding mechanism supported by Austria, Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the European Union. The DGF supports state and non-state partners to strengthen democratization, protect human rights, improve access to justice and enhance accountability in Uganda. Website: http://www.dgf.ug/

32 The parliament has members directly elected by voters to single-seat constituencies and other members elected from so-called special interest groups. According to the Ugandan parliament's website, the 9th Parliament of Uganda is composed of: 238 constituency representatives; 112 district woman representatives; 10 Uganda People's Defence Forces representatives; 5 representatives of the youth; 5 representatives of persons with disabilities; 5 representatives of workers; and 13 ex-officio members.

33 For the baseline survey, NDI staff contacted and interviewed 243 of the 350 directly elected MPs. It included 93 of the 110 pilot MPs.

communication and information seeking by citizens is encouraged and facilitated by the USpeak program, these efforts have thus far seemed to lack the fundamentals necessary to build a stronger and more effective citizen voice. Focus has understandably been on processes and information in these early stages, but in order to greatly expand usage it will be necessary to encourage use of the USpeak system to address issues that are of broad and deep concern to citizens and around which activism is more likely to occur.

Citizen organizations have not yet taken advantage of USpeak to lobby MPs. Nor have they played an intermediary role by acting as disseminators of information about USpeak for citizens or used the system to interpret, aggregate or amplify citizens' concerns. When queried on the reasons for this, NDI staff, several local organizations, and individuals active in Ugandan politics all suggested that while this was partly attributable to low levels of awareness of USpeak, a far greater challenge was that grassroots citizen engagement was simply not part of the Ugandan CSO culture any more than it was for political parties or government and that USpeak had therefore not been embraced by civil society organizations or their leaders.

Accountability

Initially, MPs had anticipated that usage of USpeak would reflect their predominant view that they are "an ATM to [their] constituents."[34] Yet ongoing data center analysis of the topics raised and types of requests made by constituents through USpeak indicates that users are less prone to appeal for direct financial aid or personal goods than MPs had previously thought and more likely to request that MPs ensure better delivery of public services. As a result, more MPs have expressed interest in the USpeak system and are changing their perceptions of constituents' interests. While initial evaluations by NDI and Columbia University indicate that no large-scale behavior change of MPs has yet occurred, the Institute anticipates that as the program expands and civil society groups, citizens, and representatives become more accustomed to it, there will be increasing expectations that MPs at least respond to constituent concerns. This could be an important step towards accountability.

Conclusions

The USpeak system offers a well-designed set of tools for constituent communication and it is supported by robust testing and analysis. USpeak and its Ugandan citizen and MP users are all still experiencing "growing pains" and it is too soon to know whether it will make a significant contribution to Uganda's democratization. The answer will largely depend upon how MPs, citizens, and civil society organizations choose to utilize the system as it scales up.

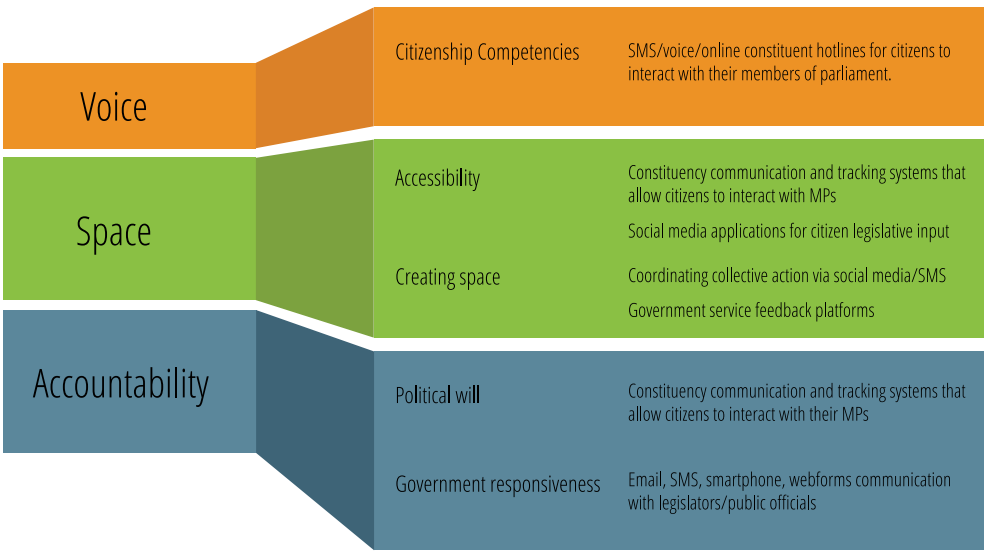
In order to increase the system's impact on democratization, it seems necessary to embed it more deeply in the country's political culture by building broader interest in its efficacy as a tool for parliamentary advocacy. One way to do this is to move beyond marketing it to the public in hopes that individuals might make use of it and focus more on working with issue-based CSOs who could - with technical assistance - engage large numbers of citizens in their work[35] and promote and use USpeak

34 This comment was made by Hon. Rebecca Kadaga, the speaker of the parliament, at a conference on government and opposition relations held in May 2011 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

35 Examples include the Citizens Coalition for Electoral Democracy in Uganda (CCEDU), comprised of 780 locally-based civic groups spread out across the country, and the Uganda National NGO Forum, which brings together several broad-based platforms of NGOs on budgetary and governance issues

to advance their mutual concerns. This could help move USpeak beyond being an underutilized constituent communication tool to an effective political engagement channel that could play an important role in aggregating and prioritizing citizen concerns and setting expectations of government responsiveness. NDI has suggested this approach to donors for future programming consideration.

Dimensions of Citizen Participation and Technology use in the Uganda USpeak Program



Case Study: UgandaWatch

Use of SMS and an Interactive Website for Coalition Work, Voter Education, Election Observation, and Reporting

– Koebel Price, Lead Researcher

Background

In the run-up to the February 2011 elections, NDI partnered with three Ugandan CSO consortia, Democracy Monitoring Group (DEMGroup), **Citizens Election Watch-IT (CEW-IT)**[36], and the **Citizen's Coalition for Electoral Democracy in Uganda**[37] (CCEDU), to implement a 14-month program to encourage voter confidence in Uganda's electoral process and institutions through a voter education and election reporting program called **UgandaWatch**[38]. UgandaWatch combined the work of trained short and long-term election observers with crowdsourced citizen reporting of election-related issues. It combined two technologies: an SMS hotline and an interactive public website to map citizens' reports. The overarching goals were to provide an avenue to move citizens from passively accepting fraud in politics to engaging in actions to stop it; to keep those citizens engaged in such activity beyond the elections; to establish norms of responsiveness from government institutions - in this case the Election Commission; to increase the credibility and efficacy of civil society advocacy work by using data in their election-related efforts; and to ultimately deter election fraud. NDI and its partner organizations determined that strategic use of mobile phone and web-based technology tools provided the most promise for delivering on these goals. A number of factors informed this decision, including an assessment of traditional outlets (e.g., reports to local elections officials, the police, or the national election commission) for reporting election-related violence or fraud that the partners considered unavailable, unresponsive, or ineffective.

In the months preceding the election, NDI assisted in the production and broadcast of radio advertisements to publicize why and how citizens should use UgandaWatch. As part of this public outreach, DEMGroup, the main electoral watchdog coalition, worked with Ugandan recording artist Bobi Wine to compose a song on the importance of civic engagement and reporting electoral irregularities. The song received nationwide publicity and played widely on radio and television across the country.

UgandaWatch is a well-examined initiative. Following the election, NDI conducted focus group research to seek out information, including public perceptions of the initiative, reasons for using or not using it, expectations of those who did use UgandaWatch, and what role, if any, was envisioned for UgandaWatch between elections. In addition, Swedish researchers Johan Hellstrom of Stockholm University and Anna Karefelt of Uppsala University conducted post-election polling to research UgandaWatch to "examine the challenges and opportunities in using mobile phones for political participation."[39] Investigation for this case study built upon the earlier research by exploring some of the findings in interviews and a most significant change exercise with leaders of the consortia responsible for implementing UgandaWatch.

Technology Use

NDI worked with the Ugandan technology vendor Mountbatten Ltd. on a platform that allowed for SMS, reporting, and interactive UgandaWatch website that would map citizen reports. UgandaWatch ran a dedicated four-digit SMS short code[40] that

36 http://cewit.or.ug
37 http://www.ccedu.org.ug
38 http://www.ugandawatch.org
39 Their findings were presented in a paper entitled Mobile Participation? Crowdsourcing during the 2011 Uganda General Elections
40 An SMS short code is a 4- 6 digit number that is shorter and easier to remember than a phone number

– at a cost of 220 shillings, or about .09 USD – Ugandans could use to share election observations, report election abuses and irregularities, as well as ask questions about the election process. DEMGroup specialists analyzed the information, mapped it on the website, and followed up with various stakeholders such as the electoral commission and the Ugandan police on specific reports that warranted a response.

Impressions and Analysis

The UgandaWatch initiative was well conceived and well-constructed from a technology standpoint. It enabled citizens to safely report abuses and express their concerns on election-related matters and displayed it geographically and in real time. The use of a short-code helped the promotion of, and participation in the program. However, UgandaWatch did not help the coalition achieve many of its larger political aspirations. In the most significant change exercise, coalition participants agreed that this was a missed opportunity attributable to a number of factors. The program was slow to start due to technical issues, a lack of a unified coalition strategy, and management problems. This was compounded by the late arrival of donor funds. Participants said that, as a result, by the time UgandaWatch got up and running, the elections were near and thus there was too little time to build the program as they would have liked. Promotion of the initiative was cut short and was not great enough to sensitize a critical mass of citizens to UgandaWatch, which reduced its usage. Furthermore, the participants cited the program's lack of a citizen engagement strategy, with feedback mechanisms that created a dialogue with users, as a fundamental reason for its limited impact.

Voice and Space

Citizens across the country submitted more than 15,000 reports on voter bribery, intimidation, procedural violations, and other irregularities to UgandaWatch. The vast majority of information pertained to violations of polling regulations, bribery, or violence, and the program's coalition leaders stated that due to safety concerns these incidents would have otherwise gone largely unreported. Participants in NDI's post-election focus group research indicated that UgandaWatch provided a space for citizens to report without being identified or "branded" by local elites. For example, those who submitted instances of "ghost polling stations"[41] felt protected by reporting to a third party instead of complaining to officials in their district who may have played a role in setting up the ghost stations. UgandaWatch's use of SMS was seen by focus group participants as empowering and uniting and they cited the program's biggest contribution as its equalizing effect in "empowering the voiceless like myself," and "being open to all regardless of social class." In this way, UgandaWatch provided a new space for citizens to safely express their voice on election-related issues.

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While the UgandaWatch program's use of technology successfully promoted citizen interest and engagement, non-technology difficulties in program coordination and implementation made it less successful in keeping users politically informed and active beyond the elections. For example, only one of the three coalition partners – CEWIT – has maintained contact with some of the

41 Polling stations that appear on an election results list but that were not part of polling station lists provided in advance to citizen groups or political parties. Ghost polling stations that appear post-election are an indicator of fraud in an election.

UgandaWatch users and worked to integrate them into a network of approximately 1,000 monitors reporting on government service delivery, budgeting, and procurements via their **Uchaguzi website**[42].

Accountability

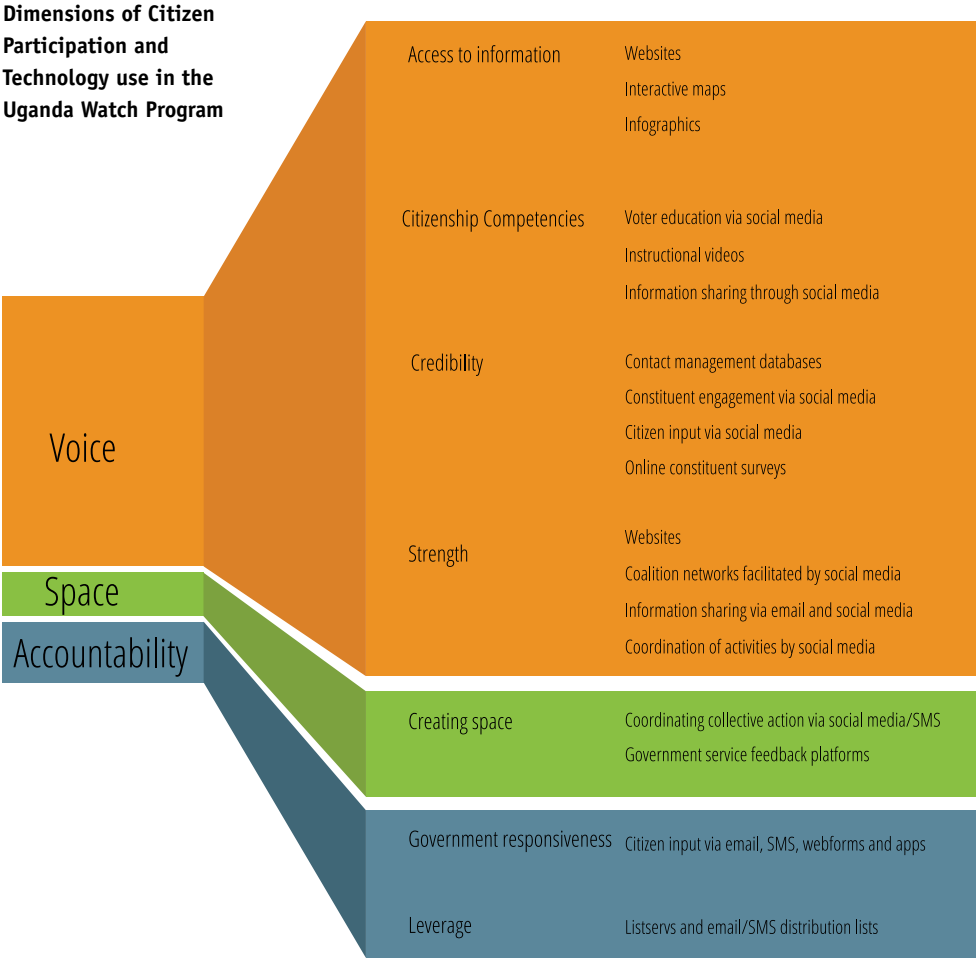
The desire to have the UgandaWatch website serve as a coalition platform and ongoing tool for citizens and CSOs to come together to fight corruption has not been realized. The site has been dormant since shortly after the elections. Leaders of the coalition's partner organizations attribute this to difficulties in collaboration and planning amongst the groups, rather than technology considerations.

42 http://uchaguzi-uganda.blogspot.com

Conclusions

The analysis suggests that while there is no doubt the numbers of citizens participating in UgandaWatch was impressive, the type and quality of this participation is, in aggregate, not the sort that would be expected to help citizens become the drivers of change for democratic outcomes that the coalition hoped for. This was not a problem with the technology. Both local partner and NDI staff stated that there was a clear need, but no financial resources for more support for the non-technology aspects of the groups' efforts. Such assistance would have helped the groups in coalescing their strategies and resources and defining a common vision for an ongoing citizen education and activation campaign that was enabled by – but not limited to - the UgandaWatch interactive website.

Dimensions of Citizen Participation and Technology use in the Uganda Watch Program



Additional Impressions on Technology Initiatives in Uganda

The use of technology by citizen groups in Uganda has so far had a limited effect on sustained political change and government accountability. Organizations that researchers spoke to in Uganda seem to have an idealized view of citizen participation that assumes that lack of access to information and communication channels underlie the accountability problem in Uganda. This perspective operates on the assumption that if citizens are given more access to government information and opportunities to express their individual viewpoints, the problem will be self-correcting.

For example, in programs that are monitoring service delivery or local budgets, citizens were provided with abundant information and an opportunity to communicate amongst themselves, with CSO staff, and with public officials, but there was little discernible change in activism. While tens of thousands of citizens had engaged in these programs via the internet and mobile platforms, participants have not organized, or mobilized in ways that matter politically as a result. In addition, technology was often deployed because it lowered the costs involved in getting information to or from citizens without sufficient regard to long-term democratic development. Finally, in some instances CSOs said the introduction of technology taxed their already stretched resources and had a negative impact on their operations. In other instances, technology appeared to be substituted *in toto* for an overall political engagement strategy, mitigating positive outcomes. The cumulative effect of these dynamics was the appearance that Ugandans are often being treated strictly as consumers of government services or information, rather than citizens with agency and the competency to act collectively.

> > > > > EGYPT

Vignette: *Ally Sotak*

Civic Education and Constitutional Monitoring

After the January 2011 citizen uprising and the subsequent fall of the Mubarak government, operating space within Egypt's political environment opened dramatically, increasing opportunities for organized and meaningful citizen participation in the political process. Anticipating parliamentary and presidential elections, NDI identified a widespread need for voter information and education. The Institute provided technical support to its local partner, the Partners in Change coalition (PIC), to launch the *Ally Sotak* (Raise Your Voice) voter education campaign in October 2011. *Ally Sotak* is a collaborative partnership with PIC and a coalition of approximately 44 other Egyptian civil society organizations that individually advocate on a wide range of issues from human rights to care for people with disabilities across Egypt's 27 governorates.

The hallmark of the *Ally Sotak* campaign was that it provided voters with basic, nonpartisan information about their rights and responsibilities in preparation for November 2011 parliamentary elections, which no other civic or political organization was offering. This information included how to register and where to vote. With NDI's guidance, the group developed a multi-faceted campaign plan that bridged online and offline activities:

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in addition to hundreds of public events across the country, *Ally Sotak* also created a campaign **website**[33] and built a **social media presence**[34] on Facebook. The campaign's website became a central organizing tool that established uniformity in messaging and information for a quickly organized, country-wide campaign. Because *Ally Sotak* provided citizens with detailed information on a variety of topics related to the elections, including voter registration, accepted forms of ID, and where to vote, creating the website was instrumental in offering a one-stop resource where all this information could be found. This was also true for *Ally Sotak* organizers and volunteers, who accessed the website's public events calendars and used downloadable campaign resources for events across the country. This facilitated the training of a decentralized network of volunteers, allowing *Ally Sotak* to expand rapidly without compromising accuracy or comprehensiveness. To complement the website, the campaign utilized social media tools to disseminate election-related information and advertise resources available online. As *Ally Sotak* created online content, it tracked users' engagement with the campaign to ensure that future activities resonated with its target audience.

All told, *Ally Sotak* estimates that it reached over 2.5 million Egyptians directly by maximizing the reach of its online/social media outreach (including nearly 300,000 likes on Facebook) or through offline activities. The *Ally Sotak* campaign also encouraged citizens, especially young people, to take an active approach to acquiring information and developing a deeper understanding of the election process. For example, the campaign used the website and social media to advertise candidate fairs, public events where candidates and political parties interacted with voters, and where

43 http://en.allysotak.com/
44 https://www.facebook.com/ally.sotak.3

Ally Sotak set up a booth where volunteers provided nonpartisan information to citizens, and directed them to the campaign website and social media.

Building on the credibility it established during the elections, in 2012 *Ally Sotak* partnered with the Egyptian Constituent Assembly, the body charged with drafting a new constitution and comprising representatives from across the political spectrum. *Ally Sotak* representatives observed the assembly sessions and reported through Facebook about new developments in the drafting discussions. The campaign complemented the online work with door-to-door campaigns, public events, and campaign volunteers stationed on public transportation to collect citizen input. As in previous efforts, the offline campaign referred citizens to the website as a source for more information on the constitutional referendum. Once the constitution was drafted, *Ally Sotak* provided audio recordings of each constitutional article on its website which citizens were able to give a thumbs-up or thumbs-down vote. These recordings also increased access to the constitutional process for Egypt's visually-impaired community. The Constituent Assembly discussed 100 of these suggestions, eventually adopting 34 for the final constitution that was ratified in December 2012.

> > > > > **GLOBAL**

Vignette: Opening Parliaments

Networking among Parliamentary Monitoring Organizations on Issues of Parliamentary Openness and Democratic Reform

The **OpeningParliament.org**[45] project aims to facilitate networking among parliamentary monitoring organizations (PMOs) on issues of parliamentary openness and democratic reform. Through a joint NDI-World Bank Institute **survey**[46] that identified more than 190 civil society groups that monitor parliaments in over 80 countries, NDI recognized the potential benefits of collaboration and experience sharing among these organizations. NDI began its efforts to foster a community of practice among PMOs by hosting a global meeting of PMO leaders in partnership with the Sunlight Foundation and the Latin American Network for Legislative Transparency, which resulted in the development of the *Declaration on Parliamentary Openness*, a declaration of principles and a shared call to parliaments for increased openness and citizen engagement.

Cooperation and collaboration among PMOs has been stimulated by the development of the OpeningParliament.org web portal, which serves as a networking hub for PMOs and a home for the declaration and other key documents produced by the network. Further knowledge development, resource exchange and political analysis are achieved through the OpeningParliament blog, an associated email listserv, the PMO Network Google Group, and social media presence on Twitter and Facebook. Future plans include crowdsourced collection of data about parliamentary openness policies and practices which will be analyzable using data visualization tools created by community members, and downloadable for those interested in exploring the information using custom tools. A wiki, or web application which allows people to add, modify, or delete content in a collaboration with others, will also be employed to further facilitate knowledge sharing.

Through intra-network collaboration on tools and approaches, PMOs continue to improve their monitoring of legislative institutions to enhance

45 http://www.openingparliament.org
46 http://www.ndi.org/files/governance-parliamentary-monitoring-organizations-survey-september-2011.pdf

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citizen understanding of parliaments and to advocate and support parliamentary efforts to become more representative, accessible, accountable, and responsive. The OpeningParliament project seeks to use technologies that reduce barriers to participation and give preference to existing technologies, particularly those created by member organizations, rather than creating custom tools for the network. For instance, after discussing the Declaration at the initial PMO Leaders Conference, NDI and its partners used the open-source online markup tool **PublicMarkup.org**[47], created by the Sunlight Foundation, to enable online commenting and revision of the Declaration text. PMO leaders, legislative staff and governance experts from around the world weighed in providing hundreds of suggestions and amendments. Similarly, the Open Knowledge Foundations' **TimeMapper**[48] is being used to keep track of developments related to the Declaration on Parliamentary Openness over time.

Bolstered by support they receive from the PMO Network and recognizing the potential for improved collaboration with parliaments to deepen their commitments to openness and to citizen engagement in parliamentary work, more than 125 civil society organizations from 75 countries — and counting — have endorsed the *Declaration on Parliamentary Openness*. Dozens of organizations have used the Declaration, which is presently available in 17 languages, in their domestic advocacy for increased parliamentary openness and transparency. Early successes include endorsement of the Declaration by the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe's Parliamentary Assembly, Mexican Senate, the Legislature of Andalucia, and the Buenos Aires city legislature.

47 http://publicmarkup.org
48 http://timemapper.okfnlabs.org

> > > > > **GHANA**

Vignette: CODEO Ghana

Technology-Enhanced Data Collection and Information Dissemination for Election Observation

Ghana is a stable democracy in West Africa that has had a series of successful democratic elections and two peaceful transfers of power. Nevertheless, the December 2012 presidential and parliamentary polls were expected to be extremely close, and Ghanaians and international observers were concerned that citizens may not accept the official elections results without independent verification of their accuracy. To address this concern, NDI partnered with the **Ghana Center for Democratic Development**[49] (CDD-Ghana) and **Ghana's Coalition for Domestic Election Observers**[50] (CODEO) to monitor the election. This was the second time that CODEO, with NDI support, conducted a parallel vote tabulation (PVT), in which trained citizen volunteers are deployed to a statistically representative sample of polling stations across the country to monitor and report on the conduct of the voting process and - crucially - polling station results. Statisticians and analysts at the data center rapidly analyze the incoming information from the observers and are able to draw representative conclusions about the conduct of the election and, more importantly in many countries, the actual results. For the past decade, NDI has worked with election monitoring partners to develop technology tools that that speed up and improve the quality of data collection by volunteers stationed at polling places and to facilitate the dissemination of information to the public.

http://www.codeoghana.org/codeo-2012-map.html

In past elections, when observers would call in their results, the data was slow to arrive and often compromised by human error. For the 2012 elections, CODEO adopted SMS as a way to transfer data from its 4,000 observers. Observers sent upward of 60,0000 text messages on election day to statisticians and analysts at the central data center. Just several hours after polls closed, CODEO was able to provide an accurate picture of voting and counting process and to verify independently the election commission's presidential results.

NDI also assisted CODEO to develop a multipronged public information campaign that sought to use traditional and new technology to reach as many Ghanaians as possible. As in many countries, radio is a widely accessible and inexpensive medium to reach a mass audience in Ghana, but distribution of content to rural stations poses a number of logistical challenges. NDI assisted CODEO to produce short audio clips, including basic election information, explanation of the PVT and analysis of election results, which were distributed to community radio stations through mobile phone networks using an interactive voice response (IVR) system called Freedom Fone. This allowed stations that did not have internet access to incorporate the time sensitive clips into their news broadcasts.

49 http://www.cddghana.org
50 http://www.codeoghana.org

> > > > > **CODEO's independent vote count using SMS technology and collecting results posted at more than a thousand polling stations located in every corner of the country verified the official returns. CODEO engaged in extensive public outreach via traditional and new media channels that gave many voters the confidence necessary to peacefully accept the election results.**

While radio remains the dominant source of information for most Ghanaians, a growing number - particularly young urbanites - have started using social media as part of their news diet. To reach these people, CODEO employed a relatively inexpensive paid advertising strategy. Using targeted Facebook ads, the CODEO page went from 120 to 9000 followers in about 10 days. According to Facebook's "friends-of-friends" metrics, this amounted to a reach of approximately 1.6 million Ghanaians. CODEO's Facebook followers actively used its page as a forum for asking questions about the election and getting answers directly from CODEO.

Finally, CODEO created an **interactive map**[51] that provided a visual way of understanding the events of election day. For instance, performance data for individual polling stations (such as whether there were enough ballots, whether the station opened on time, and whether voters had access to their polling place) were aggregated at a constituency level and displayed on the map. Demographic and prior-year election results were also included, giving viewers an easy to understand picture of the electoral process for the different regions of the country.

The election results were close, with incumbent President John Dramani Mahama receiving 50.7% votes to challenger Nana Afuko-Addo's 47.7%, a margin of just 3 percentage points and less than a percentage point from requiring a runoff. CODEO's independent vote count using SMS technology and collecting results posted at more than a thousand polling stations located in every corner of the country verified the official returns. CODEO engaged in extensive public outreach via traditional and new media channels that gave many voters the confidence necessary to peacefully accept the election results.

51 http://www.codeoghana.org/codeo-2012-map.html

> > > > > **PERU**

Vignette: 131 Voices

Enabling Citizen Input in Legislative Processes through an Online Platform

Many Peruvians have continued to face growing socioeconomic divisions and exclusion from politics. Citizens have reported low levels of satisfaction in democratic institutions due to a lack of trust in political parties and politicians. In order to address these low levels of public confidence and overall pessimism about the democratic process, as well as to improve the quality of legislation, NDI assisted local partner *Reflexión Democrática* (RD) in developing a website titled[37] ***131 Voces***[52] (131 Voices). Prior to this program, citizens had limited access to information about MPs' actions, legislation, or current debates in Congress. With a name reflecting the 130 members of parliament and the voice of the Peruvian people, 131 Voices opens MPs' voting records and pending legislation to public scrutiny and feedback as an effort to keep Peruvian lawmakers accountable on policy decisions and enabling closer links between public officials, CSOs, and citizens.

The ***131 Voces***[52] website includes information on specific MPs and their proposed bills, with space for citizens to leave comments and opinions. Additionally, breakdowns of legislative agendas by committee are provided, enabling activists to target specific initiatives and better organize advocacy and outreach programs. Twenty-four legislators joined the initial phase of 131 Voices, committing to actively provide information on bills and activities in Congress and to communicate with citizens through the platform, thereby increasing the level of transparency and citizens' access to legislative information. Furthermore, specifically providing a breakdown of legislative committee agendas, where most law-making decisions are made, provides an opportunity to correctly identify and disseminate information to enhance citizen input and advocacy efforts.

One example of how the site connects leaders with constituents was the commentary generated by a proposal by Luis Iberico of the Alliance for Great Change party (*Alianza por el Gran Cambio*) for the "creation of a National Institute for Information and Transparency" that would seek to promote greater access to information and openness in government. Citizens expressed support for the objective of improved transparency, which was noted as a key to fighting corruption, but also suggested that the initiative should avoid creating a new, ineffective bureaucracy.

While the website is still in its beginning stages, *Reflexión Democrática* plans to continue to the project and seek additional ways to engage Peruvian citizens through this platform.

52 http://131voces.pe/

3 CONCLUSIONS

Taking into account the findings from the desk-based review, country case studies and vignettes, key informant interviews, and roundtable discussions, NDI has drawn several conclusions about the relationships between citizen participation, technology, and the democratization process.

> > > > > 1. **Technology that was used to purposefully amplify the political organization of citizens' groups had more political traction and impact.** For example, interactive websites in both the Burma Election Tracker and the Citizen Security and Justice Program in Mexico served as umbrellas that unified disparate groups in coalition under a common campaign theme. This resulted in greater coordination and cooperation amongst the groups, greater impact on their issues, and demonstrated the transformative possibilities of the strategic application of technologies.

2. **Technology can be used to readily create spaces and opportunities for citizens to express their voices, but making these voices politically stronger and the spaces more meaningful is a harder challenge that is political and not technological in nature.** It is also one often overshadowed by short-term, high profile projects that emphasize technology and not politics. In the course of this research, donors, practitioners and local groups alike constructed programs around an exuberance for technology to increase citizens' access to information and provide avenues of communication in hopes that this would transform how politics is practiced. This approach presumes that providing information about how to express their voice with new technology tools would be sufficient for citizens to do so, and that this would lead to a cohesive movement of democratic engagement**. The research findings imply that a more involved process is often necessary in order to maximize the potential for democratic developments, including providing more technical assistance in the non–technological aspect of programs.** For a technology intervention to have the desired impact, it may require the development of clear political goals, opportunities for leadership development, substantive work with intermediary groups, and for relationships with public officials to be fostered and established - all of which take time and resources.

3. **Programs need to define a plausible connection between the use of technology and the factors that contribute to democratic development.** More information or communication opportunities for citizens alone will not address the underlying power inequities or the motives and incentives that influence public officials. While technology can help citizens create and consume information and communicate more easily with public officials, engaging government meaningfully often follows traditional mechanisms of institutional power and requires astute political organizing expertise**. In order for a technology intervention to have the desired impact, it will require clear political goals, opportunities for leadership development, substantive work with intermediary groups, and the opportunity to establish relationships with public officials. All of this takes time and resources and necessitates more assistance in the non-technological aspect of these programs in order to maximize their potential for democratic developments.**

4. **Technology enables citizen self-organizing and the rapid creation of loosely formed groups that can quickly react to political openings, build support, and bring focus and energy to issues.** The vignette on the 2% Women and More campaign in Mexico provides an example of this in practice. More research is necessary to determine whether **the technology-enabled loosely formed groups, while effective in short-term campaigns with clear political or policy goals, can sustain a strong enough voice or exert similar significant leverage or political influence over time** without more formal and strategic organization.

5. **There is a blurring of the meaning between the technologies of open data and the politics of open government that clouds program strategies and implementation.** This lack of precision had various stakeholders using the same "open government" terminology, yet articulating different examples of successful outcomes, creating a "where you stand depends on where you sit" situation regarding both the application of technologies and the assessment of their efficacy. During the research, this disparity emerged most clearly when stakeholders spoke differently about the purpose of the same activity. For example, individuals with a technology focus more often cited social media, legislative websites, or application programming interfaces (APIs) as positive examples of technology's impact on government. In this case, access to government *data* defined government openness and implied corresponding citizen action and government responsiveness as a result.

   Meanwhile, issue advocacy groups and civil society leaders complained that, despite access to more information and new communication channels, they were no better able to engage in meaningful policy discussions or influence decisions. For these individuals, open data indicated more transparent government, but did not offer more opportunities for participatory, inclusive, or accountable decision making.

   This lack of clarity creates challenges when designing and implementing democracy assistance programs and has the potential to confuse citizens and public officials alike. It may also give cover to those in government who may embrace "openness" by using technology to provide access to more information, but still obscure decision making and exclude citizens. One way of dealing with this is for programs to explicitly separate the concepts of political openness and open data and then clearly articulate the underlying assumptions about how they will link to advance citizen participation and democratic outcomes.

6. **While technology has opened up new avenues for citizens to engage with public officials and institutions, substantive input into political processes remains elusive.** Technology has opened up new channels for direct communication with decision makers heretofore closed or limited to political elites. However, these new channels do not automatically lead to an increase in the strength of citizen voice or in the creation of more meaningful spaces for political dialogue. Much of the political gain resulting from this access remains aspirational. While being heard or accessing political information is important, it is a far cry from the type of engagement in which citizens are involved in decision making. The challenge is rarely, if ever, as simple as citizens making more demands or government listening more attentively. Rather, citizens must organize in ways that get them a seat at the decision-making table. Technology may or may not be key to this in a given context.

7. **Some of democracy's intrinsic aspects, for example, the freedoms of speech and association, appear to be more readily advanced by technology than the development of the norms, values, and practices that are necessary for democracy to take root.** Technology can be used to readily create spaces and opportunities for citizens to express their voices individually or collectively, but making these voices politically stronger and the spaces more meaningful is a harder challenge that is political and not technological in nature. It is also one that can be easily overshadowed by short-term, high profile, donor-driven projects that emphasize technology, rather than politics.

   The research found that donors, practitioners, and local groups alike constructed programs around an exuberance for technology and the idea that increasing citizens' access to information and providing avenues of communication would transform political practices and outcomes. The approach presumes that providing information about how to express their voice with new technology tools will be sufficient for citizens to do so, and that this will lead to transformational interactions with government. Research highlighted the uncertainty of these assumptions. For example, extensive radio marketing campaigns designed to increase general public awareness of the Uganda programs proved to have limited impact on the use of the technology-enabled channels for engagement that were being advertised.

8. **Digital technologies in the hands of citizens have become ubiquitous, especially in the form of mobile devices, and have increased the possibility of political process monitoring.** This includes systematic monitoring of election processes, political violence monitoring, monitoring instances of corruption and delivery of government services, and other examples involving citizen reporting. Mobile technology, especially, allows citizens to document and report directly issues they see in their communities. New methodologies such as uploading reports to public websites using crowdsourcing tools need to evolve to become effective for many situations. These tools can be used very effectively as part of a program using methodologies for reporting, response, analysis, and interpreting and communicating results, but they are not by themselves likely to produce significant outcomes. For increased transparency to have an impact, citizens must be able to process, analyze, or use the newly available information. Their capabilities can be strengthened by active media, prior social-mobilization experience, coalitions, and intermediaries who can "translate" and communicate information. Programs that identify and incorporate these intermediaries into design and implementation increase their chances for impact.

9. **Political will and the technical capacity to provide accurate data on government performance or engage citizens in policy making are lacking in many emerging democracies.** Technology may have changed institutions' *ability* to respond to citizen demands, but its mere presence has not fundamentally changed *actual* government behavior. Compounding this is the fact that increased access to information and communication channels increases citizens' expectations that their input will be considered and that public officials will respond. Failure to manage or meet these expectations can have a deleterious effect on citizen trust in government institutions and ultimately on democratic development.

10. **There is a scarcity of data on specific demographic groups' use of, or barriers to technology for political participation. Programs seeking to close the digital divide as an instrument of narrowing the political divide should be informed by more research into barriers to access to both politics and technology.** This should be carried into monitoring and evaluation, where additional work is needed to identify better data points for effective evaluations on political participation that is enabled specifically by technology, especially for constituencies such as women, people with disabilities, young people, ethnic minorities, and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community. While technologies can be used to a create new political space for citizen engagement, occupation of this space remains a challenge as the **new space is often occupied by the same individuals and groups with the most access prior to the introduction of new technology. In this way, technology can be easily be used as a quicker and more convenient way to continue informal and patrimonial relations.**

    Very little research exists that examines the ways that women and other marginalized groups access and use the internet, mobile phones, and other digital technologies specifically for political engagement. The available data shows that in many emerging democracies women lag behind in access, use, and ability to communicate online and via mobile devices. A **2012 Intel report**[53] found that nearly 25 percent fewer women have access to the internet than their male counterparts. That number increases to 43 percent in Sub-Saharan Africa, 34 percent in the Middle East, and 33 percent in South Asia. Likewise, a 2010 Global Association of Mobile Operators (GSMA) **Development Fund report**[54] found that a woman is 21 percent less likely to own a mobile phone than a man. That number increases to 23 percent in Africa, 24 percent in the Middle East, and 37 percent in South Asia. Reliable statistics on differing levels of access to technology due to age, ethnicity, disability, or sexual orientation are not readily available in developing country contexts.

    At the same time, anecdotal evidence suggests technology can serve as an equalizer for the political participation of women and other marginalized groups. The internet has enabled groups such as the LGBT community or people with disabilities to create online spaces to organize and interact in environments where gathering in physical spaces poses a security risk or is impossible due to inaccessible infrastructure. Providing opportunities for political engagement online can also be a particularly vital component of programs targeting youth in countries with high internet penetration. Further information on ensuring technology is accessible for people with various types of disabilities can be found in **Section 508** of the U.S. Rehabilitation Act[55] and in technology accessibility guidelines like the **Daisy Consortium**[56], **Bobby Approved**[57] and the **World Wide Web Consortium**.[58]

53 http://www.intel.com/content/dam/www/public/us/en/documents/pdf/women-and-the-web
54 http://www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/GSMA_Women
55 https://www.section508.gov/
56 http://www.daisy.org/
57 http://www.bobby-approved.com/
58 http://www.w3.org/

11. **Research suggests that technology-enabled citizen participation and government accountability programs are often treating the public strictly as consumers of government services or information, rather than citizens with agency and the competency to act collectively, yet expecting outcomes associated with organized collective activity.** This was observed in a number of programs where technology is used to drive engagement, rather than concrete issues and political agendas that citizens can organize around in ways that transform political practices and contribute to democratization**.**

    In programs that use technology at the expense of political analysis and strategy, the underlying power dynamics, patronage patterns, and processes that hamper democratization remain in place. For example, programs that use technologies to promote a "citizen as consumer" dynamic that casts government as a vendor of services to be delivered to individual citizens may make it harder to get to the critical democratic development stage of building productive relationships between citizens, public officials, and institutions. Researchers observed programs substituting communication, advertising, and marketing for political engagement, neglecting opportunities to build normative, democratic citizenship competencies in contexts where this was a clear deficit. This will limit their democratizing impact. Building citizen engagement "*encompasses political and civic attitudes and cognitions as well as behaviors. Such engagement is characterized by adherence to democratic norms and values, a sense of trust in the political system, and some level of efficacy and political interest."*[59]

12. **Likewise, attempts to simply crowdsource public inputs will not result in users self-organizing into politically influential groups, since citizens lack the opportunities to develop leadership, unity, and commitment around a shared vision necessary for meaningful collective action.** Citizens must engage in a variety of activities beyond communication and information sharing in order to build a counterweight to entrenched power inequities. These may include joining civic associations, civic education, deliberation and dialogue, negotiating, lobbying, mobilizing and civil disobedience. For example, in the Mexico Citizen Security and Justice program, coalitions of CSOs used a crowdsourcing approach to engage large numbers of citizens who they then engaged in a range of activities, incrementally bringing them into a broader political campaign that expanded citizens' skills and knowledge, provided meaningful interactions with public officials, and strengthened the coalition's political base. Conversely, the Uganda USpeak and Peru 131 Voices programs also used a crowdsourcing approach for citizen inputs but did not offer additional opportunities for engagement. As a result, each is struggling with the next steps that would allow citizen voices to resonate.

13. **Political realities and programmatic expertise matter, yet, increasingly, so does applying technology strategically. The requirements for democracy practitioners are changing rapidly and will require new skills - those of smart political organizers and analysts, but also keen knowledge about relevant technologies that can be used to increase and deepen citizen engagement and democratization.**

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