

15. CROWD-SOURCING

MAKE ELECTIONS COUNT

IN A NUTSHELL

Tweet. Text. E-mail. From accessing your mobile phone to surfing the web on your computer, it's never been easier or quicker to monitor your elections in real-time.

Through online crowdsourcing you can let the world know of voting irregularities in your country within just a few clicks. Some of the information can even be plotted onto an interactive map online, allowing you also to see what your community is reporting.

HOW DO YOU SET IT UP?

- 1. Build a team:** Gather a reliable team of digitally savvy people who want to see elections clean and fair.
- 2. Pick your tools:** Decide whether you want to monitor elections by using social media, a ready-to-use web platform, or both, to collect data on electoral violations.
- 3. Make a plan:** Develop a timeline that everyone on the team can access.
- 4. Get to work!** Decide how to engage voters online and how they can get in touch with your team with any questions. Decide who will lead on responding to queries in a timely manner.
- 5. Launch the platform:** Plan your launch at least one month before the election. Publicise and promote it as early as possible so that users become familiar with it.
- 6. Collect your evidence:** Gather the information collected on electoral violations and pass it along to leaders and the community.
- 7. Celebrate your success!** Write a brief report for a broad audience. Publicise the success of your programme online – and even pitch your findings to news outlets. Be sure to thank everyone that participated.

WHY DO IT?

- Crowdsourcing is a simple and uncomplicated tool to raise awareness about corruption in elections.
- Accurate data you collect can be used to question an election's legitimacy. It also provides the media with figures that can be relayed to the local and international community.

YOU CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN

- Be professional. Be credible. And follow through on the project all the way to the end.
- Make a thorough rollout plan for the online platform. Put together a reliable team to make sure it's running well and have a detailed schedule.

WHAT ARE THE LIMITATIONS?

- Monitoring election violations through crowdsourcing can be extremely powerful, but requires a lot of outreach to get the word out to the online community. Be sure to have a powerful promotional period before and during the launch of the tool.
- There is the potential for misuse of ICTs. For example it can be used to disseminate misinformation and incite violence. Ensure that you have the means and access to shut down the platform if faced with a hostile situation.
- Data collected through crowdsourcing is difficult to verify – and some people may provide false information. Include a clause on the tool that states data has not been verified.
- Crowdsourcing is not a substitute for contacting emergency services – serious violations and intimidation should be reported. Be sure that those following your approach know this.

IDEA IN ACTION

Kenya: Mapping the Election

Uchaguzi is an open-source platform designed to crowdsource information via SMS and online messaging and appears on an interactive map. Pioneered in Kenya after the fall-out of the deadly 2008 elections, the website had 45,000 users in Kenya reporting on both instances of electoral fraud and acts of integrity during the following presidential elections.

Activists launched the platform to crowdsource data via Twitter, SMS, Android, e-mail and the web. More than 4,500 reports were cast – and a staggering 58 per cent of these claims have been verified. The findings were referred to by Kenya's electoral commission and international media.

Find out more: www.uchaguzi.co.ke

Venezuela: Tweeting the Election

Twitter is a simple way to monitor elections with your friends and community. Use or create a credible twitter name so that fellow tweeters know whom to contact for details on election monitoring. Design a hashtag so that voters tweeting claims of election fraud are streamlined (e.g. #PNGfreevote or #AUSvote fair).

In Venezuela, civil society organisations came together to cast a watchful eye on the national elections via Twitter. They received tweets – including photos – from around the country to gather data on election violations at the polling stations through several hashtags. They received more than 1,000 tweets claiming electoral fraud.

What hashtag will you create for tweeters to report election fraud?

Find out more: www.transparency.org/news/pressrelease/citizen_election_network_reports_on_irregularities_during_venezuelas_electi