

USHAHIDI HAITI PROJECT EVALUATION

Terms of Reference

Overview

Ushahidi Haiti Project is interested in assessing the effectiveness of the mobilization of the Ushahidi technology platform following the recent earthquake in Haiti, in particular during the initial disaster response phase. The deployment was based out of and managed by students from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, a graduate school of international affairs based at Tufts University.

The evaluation will look at how widely the Ushahidi Haiti platform was used by different organisations, how effectively it was implemented, and how it was communicated to people on the ground. Furthermore, the evaluation will address the appropriateness of Ushahidi Haiti Project's work; does this form of deployment address the real needs of the situation and add value to the response? The evaluation will take place in Boston and Haiti.

Background

Ushahidi is an interactive mapping platform, which can be used to aggregate data from a wide variety of sources on one location-specific website. The platform was originally developed by Ushahidi, Inc. a non-profit technology company, in response to the post-election violence in Kenya in 2007. Since that time, it has been used to aggregate information from the public for use in crisis response, a process often referred to as crowdsourcing.

Ushahidi, the software, is open-source, meaning that it is free to download and that the code is available, which allows computer programmers to adapt and modify the platform as they wish. Since the initial deployment, organizations and individuals have used this platform in a wide variety of contexts, including election monitoring in Nigeria and Afghanistan, modelling the swine flu outbreak, and mapping anti-immigrant violence in South Africa. Ushahidi, Inc. provides an online community for these actors to ask questions and share information¹.

The Haiti deployment began on January 12, 2010, the day the earthquake hit. It was unique among other deployments because the decision to launch the website² was made by a member of the Ushahidi, Inc. staff, Patrick Meier, a Fletcher PhD student. Meier, the director of Strategic Partnerships and Crisis Mapping for Ushahidi, quickly gained the support of volunteers from the Fletcher School, who scoured the internet for concrete information on needs, logistics (such as which roads were passable), and response.

Information came from regular news outlets, blogs, Twitter, and the Haitian radio. The human capacity needed to process this information was immense. Information needed to be geo-coded using Google Earth, Open Street Maps and other imagery sources, and then manually uploaded to the Ushahidi Haiti website. The volunteer network quickly expanded to groups in Geneva, Montreal, Washington D.C., London and Portland.

¹ Please refer to Ushahidi.com

² Website is located at Haiti.ushahidi.com

This information, once manually uploaded, could then be accessed by response organisations, either through visiting the site or by subscribing to an RSS feed, text or email alerts defined by specific locations. In urgent cases where contact numbers for relevant organisations were available, messages were transmitted directly to responders.

The acquisition of a SMS short code, 4636, on January 17th, allowed a further step-up in operations. It also complicated the process further, since now volunteers had to find ways to communicate this short code to ordinary Haitians. Haitians were informed through radio that they could text their need and location to 4636. The text messages were translated by with in near-real time by Haitian volunteers working with an associate group, Project 4636, and transmitted to volunteers. 4636 was launched in coordination with many other organizations, including Samasource and Crowdfunder, and was used by other actors, including the American Red Cross.

The mobilization of this platform was widely seen as a success. The team of students and volunteers received positive feedback from humanitarian responders include OCHA, the U.S. military, and the State Department. The role of the technology community in launching interactive maps to assist with response coordination was even mentioned by Secretary of State Hilary Clinton in a talk on internet freedom just 10 days after the earthquake.

However, the process clearly presented many challenges. The tool being implemented, Ushahidi, is relatively new, and there is little, if any, comprehensive documentation of evaluations or lessons learned from previously deployments. The platform was implemented without any planning and with a staff of volunteers, many of whom did not have experience with mapping technology or humanitarian response. Volunteers had never worked together and were scattered across the globe, with people experienced in starting or leading an organization. The mapping, translation, and communication required an extensive network of organizations: humanitarian organizations working in Haiti; the Haitian Diaspora; technology companies working both internationally and on-the ground; and Haitians citizens that provided information. In the face of these challenges, the success achieved is extraordinary; however, all agree that it should be easier the next time a group decides to implement Ushahidi, or another crisis mapping platform, in the wake of a disaster.

This evaluation is designed to assess the effects of the intervention in the early stages, in order to learn lessons for future and similar deployments. The platform must be implemented in a way that is useful and accessible to citizens, as well as the organizations that will make decisions based on the information provided. Understanding the way the tool is communicated to each of these stakeholders is crucial, as well as understanding the incentives or disincentives for use by each group. This evaluation will be vital to informing future actors that use a crisis mapping platform.

Program Theory of Change:

Access to accurate and timely information from the ground during post-crisis response periods will enable humanitarian responders to act more efficiently.

Evaluation Goal:

To understand the effect that the Ushahidi Haiti deployment had in the humanitarian crisis response effort in Haiti from January 12 to January 26, 2010 in order to inform future actors that may consider utilizing the crisis mapping platform.

Evaluation objectives:

This evaluation will have three objectives: 1) effectiveness, 2) efficiency, and 3) relevance. These objectives are defined in the OECD DAC evaluation terminology³.

Audience:

The primary users of this evaluation will be the Ushahidi Haiti Project team.

Secondary users include Ushahidi Inc., the International Network of Crisis Mappers (CM*NET)⁴ and other members of the crisis mapping community.

Readers will include the international humanitarian response community; Haitian based organizations; international donors (including multilateral organizations, private foundations, international and US government.)

Upon completion, the Ushahidi Haiti project would like to make the results of the evaluation available to the world. UHP would like to post all lessons learned on a website, as well as to disseminate findings through a variety of other mechanisms to be determined with the evaluator.

Scope

The time period being evaluated is January 12 through January 26, the immediate emergency response period.

Lines of Inquiry:

Each objective will be divided into a number of lines of inquiry, as outlined below in draft form. These will be finalized with the collaboration of the evaluator.

Effectiveness/Outcome Assessment:

1. To what degree was the Ushahidi Haiti platform able to provide accurate and useful information for the aid community?
2. Did the information gathered by Ushahidi Haiti Project Team reflect the actual distribution of needs on the ground?
3. Which organizations used Ushahidi Haiti, and which did not? For those that did not, what are their reasons? For those that did use it, how did they do so?
4. What features would have made organizations more willing to use the Ushahidi Haiti platform?
5. Were there any gaps in coverage and why?
6. How was the goal of Ushahidi communicated to individuals on the ground? This question is most relevant to the 4636 short code. How did this communication make the tool more or less effective?

³ Please refer to the OED website at http://www.oecd.org/document/22/0,2340,en_2649_34435_2086550_1_1_1_1,00.html

⁴ See <http://www.crisismappers.net/>

7. How did people on the ground perceive the tool? What benefits if any do they feel they received from sending messages to Ushahidi? Did they feel as if their use of 4636 was something they would do again?
8. Were there any positive or negative unintended consequences? Here, particular attention should be paid to assess potential conflict escalating or mitigating factors. Particular attention should also be paid to the 4636 short code and its use by Haitians citizens.

Efficiency, with a focus on process implementation:

1. Was the process responsive to the changing context and needs of the stakeholders?
2. Did the process meet the needs of one group of stakeholders more than others? Stakeholders here refers to two main groups: the Haitian community and the humanitarian response community, recognizing that there is extreme variety within these two groups. If one was prioritized, how did the impact the effectiveness of the tool?
3. How was feedback from the both the ground and from users used to adapt the tool as the crisis developed?
4. What lessons can be learned from this process?
5. How did decision-making processes, or lack therefore, impact the effectiveness of the tool?
6. Did Ushahidi Haiti Project Team have the necessary human and technological resources to implement the platform efficiently?
7. How was the process of recruiting, training, and managing volunteers implemented?
8. Were working relationships with partners effective (e.g., good communication, role clarity)?

Relevance:

1. Was the theory of change (that accurate and timely information will make the humanitarian response better) the right one in this context?
2. Did the strategy build appropriately on the theory of change?
3. Are there other strategies/theories of change that could have contributed in a more significant manner?

Evaluation Methods: The Ushahidi Haiti Project is eagerly looking forward to developing the evaluation methodology in collaboration with the evaluator. However, the team suggests that the evaluation methodology include:

- Document review of records associated with the development of the intervention (documents may include Skype conversations, emails, websites, logs and organizational documents);
- Interviews with organizations and responders who used the Ushahidi Haiti platform and with those who did not use it;
- Interviews with Ushahidi Haiti staff and volunteers;
- Surveys of Haitian citizens, or another method to assess the understanding of this tool on the ground, with ethical considerations taken into account

Evaluation Approach: Ushahidi Haiti Project envisions an evaluation following Utilisation Focussed Evaluation approach, meaning that the evaluator should work with the users of the evaluation to determine exactly what use it needs to be put to, and what exactly must be asked to best meet their needs. The evaluation should therefore be guided by the need to maximise its utility to the end users.

Implementation Information

Evaluation Manger: The Evaluation Manager is a member of the Ushahidi Haiti Project with both training and field experience in monitoring and evaluation. She will be assisted by members of the Ushahidi team in order to ensure the best support for this evaluation.

Location:

- The evaluation will require approximately two weeks of fieldwork in Haiti. This will primarily be based in Port-au-Prince, but may involve travel to other earthquake-affected areas as necessary.
- Interviews with the Ushahidi Haiti Project situation room staff will occur in Boston as well as over Skype or telephone.
- It is anticipated that interviews with aid workers who used the Ushahidi Haiti platform during the initial phase of deployment will take place by Skype or telephone.

Deliverables: Ushahidi Haiti @ Tufts, being committed to innovation and new technology, is open to creative ways of presenting evaluation results, and would like this to be reflected in proposals, including ideas for ways to disseminate findings to a wide audience. Ideas should focus on ways to make this evaluation useful to both primary and secondary users.

Deliverables will likely include:

- One evaluation report (30-40 pages in length), including graphics, images and stories to illustrate points, as well as recommendations for future interventions.
- One PowerPoint presentation summarizing the findings of the evaluation.
- One workshop with Ushahidi Haiti staff to help them understand the findings of the evaluation and begin to build lessons for the future.

Duration and working days: It is anticipated that approximately 26 working days, starting June 2 and ending July 2, with additional days in September required to conduct a workshop to present findings to the Ushahidi Haiti Team.

May 17	Hiring process complete
May 21	Contract Finalized and signed
June 1	TOR Finalized
June 2 – 10 7 working days	Preparation; document review; U.S. based interviews
June 11 – 26	Travel to Haiti and in-country data collection 12 working days, weekends with (2) days for travel and (1) day off
June 28 – July 2	Data analysis and preparation of deliverables 5 working days
September, TBA	The workshop will likely take place in Boston after school has re-convened

Some dates can be renegotiated as necessary. However, travel to Haiti cannot start until after June 10. Another key consideration is the need to have in-country research completed before hurricane season begins in July.

Logistical support: The Ushahidi Haiti Project Team will provide, as necessary:

- Organizational support to manage appointments, transport, etc.
- Logistical support for flights to and from evaluation locations, and for accommodation in Haiti
- Access to office equipment in Boston.
- An evaluation assistant from the Ushahidi team to assist the evaluator as required. It is anticipated that this person will travel to Haiti with the evaluator.
- Translation support.

Evaluator qualifications:

Ushahidi Haiti Project Team is looking for an evaluator with the following qualifications:

- 10 - 15 years of experience in evaluation or in working closely with evaluations in other positions
- Strong core Utilization Focused evaluative skills
- Evaluation expertise that includes theoretical training and international field experience
- Interest in and comfort with technology
- Experience with post-crisis humanitarian response a must; experience working in Haiti strongly desired
- Working knowledge of Haitian Creole and French is desirable

Applications should include a CV and a short, two-page proposal outlining 1) relevant skills and experience, 2) initial reactions to and suggestions for improvement of the TOR, and 3) your experience with Utilization Focused evaluation, including your thoughts on the pros and cons of this approach.

Please send applications to ushahidi.evaluation@gmail.com. Applications should be submitted no later than Monday, May 3.