



Report  
it live

## use collective intelligence

THIS TACTIC IS GOOD FOR CREATING OR GATHERING INFORMATION, REPORTING ON PUBLIC EVENTS SUCH AS ELECTIONS OR PROTESTS AND RESPONDING TO DISASTERS OR OUTBREAKS

### EXAMPLES FROM THE VIDEO

#### ● Field Reporting the 2008 Mumbai Terror Attacks

*By citizens of Mumbai*

Using text messages and mobile phone photos, local people self-organised to find and share information that wasn't available in the media during the Mumbai terrorist attacks. This spontaneous community reporting identified injuries and deaths and supported coordinated donations of blood and other relief efforts.

**TOOLS USED:** Twitter, Flickr, MySpace, blogging, mobile phones

**LINKS TO LEARN MORE:**

**Photos:** <http://bit.ly/TiYzh> (flickr.com)

**Twitter messages:** <http://bit.ly/nOAid> (flickr.com)

#### ● Gathering Citizen Reports of Violence

*By Foko and the Citizens of Madagascar*

Citizens of Madagascar sent SMS messages to Foko about reports of violence by the military and police during demonstrations against a takeover of the government. These reports were published on an online map, and a team of local bloggers checked the messages for accuracy. As traditional media was compromised at the time, Foko's website alerted citizens to trouble spots and gave a richer picture of the crisis than traditional reporting while ensuring an independent information source existed to report on events.

**TOOLS USED:** IntelliSMS, FrontlineSMS, Ushahidi, Twitter, mobile phones, blogging

**LINKS TO LEARN MORE:**

**FOKO website:** <http://foko.ushahidi.com/>

**Interview with Foko:** <http://bit.ly/QZvM> (globalvoicesonline.org)



TWITTER



FOKO

## PLAN YOUR ACTION

- Citizen reporting can work in many regions, although there will be differences based on both technology and your community's ease with using certain tools. This is one reason why Twitter is an effective tool in India: Indian Twitter users can post updates by text message on their mobile phones using a free short code, a service which is not available for all Twitter users worldwide.
- You may not need to create a tool from scratch. Ushahidi, which was used to track violence in Madagascar, was first built for a similar project in Kenya. The Foko team didn't have to create custom software, but they did need to adapt it to their campaign.
- One form of live reporting is to collect spontaneous reports of current events, as the Mumbai attacks did. For this form of reporting to work, it's important to have in place a network of bloggers and citizen reporters ready to publicise and respond to the live reporters' updates.
- Another way of live reporting is to coordinate reporting in advance, like the Madagascar campaign did. This kind of reporting needs a strong outreach plan to engage potential citizen reporters. Traditional media can be used to raise awareness about the initiative.
- There's growing power in community reporting. In the past 10 years, how news is made has changed considerably. Not only are communities making news of their own, but traditional media from radio to television are also including citizen reporting.



UNSUNG PEACE HEROES

## CASE STUDY

**TITLE:** Unsung Peace Heroes  
**WHO:** Butterfly Works and Media Focus on Africa Foundation  
**WHERE:** Kenya  
**WEBSITE:** <http://peaceheroes.usahidi.com>

**DESCRIPTION:**  
 Unsung Peace Heroes honoured those who worked for peace after post-election violence in Kenya in December 2007. Kenyans could nominate people and organisations by text message and email, and with paper forms at peace events. The groups Butterfly Works and Media Focus on Africa collected these nominations. Working with a local design school, Nairobiits, nominations were translated, verified and added to a map, using the community reporting tool, Ushahidi. In addition to online outreach, Peace Heroes placed newspaper, radio, and television advertisements, and Nairobiits students distributed paper handouts. In 2009 the eight winning Peace Heroes were recognised on national television, and they used their prize money to support their communities and peace projects. One winner, Joel, hid 18 people for two weeks in his compound to protect them from violence. He says,

"I received congratulations through telephone and text messages from diverse communities from far and near. As a family, we decided to throw a party and invite these people, those from my community, a local councillor, and the administration to celebrate. The need to form a peace initiative emerged during the party, and they mandated me to register a peace group and recruit members to address the violence." Marten Schoonman of Media Focus on Africa says, "The aim was to spread a message of hope and focus on the good in this time of trouble. The conflicts are far from solved, even today. Like the butterfly effect, a relatively small initiative like this has potential spin-off effects and unexpected benefits."

**TOOLS USED:** Ushahidi, mobile phones, Facebook, website.

**REACH:** National. Over 500 nominations in one month, with peaks of 80 per day after Kenyan press coverage.

**COST:** USD\$18,000 (SMS system was USD\$3000; remainder for publicity and awards for participants)



**RESOURCES:** Local staff, volunteers and partner organisations to publicise the campaign and design the Facebook page. Local balanced expert jury.

**TIME:** One month to collect nominations; three months later, awards and recognition given to Peace Heroes at ceremony.

**LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY:** 3 out of 5

**LINKS TO LEARN MORE:**  
**Heroes' Projects:** <http://bit.ly/3T67Xo> (mediafocusafrica.org)  
**Article:** <http://bit.ly/7UdtG> (butterflyworks.org)

## DO IT YOURSELF

### Ask

- How will field reporters get information to each other? Will you focus on mobile phones or the internet as a way of getting and sharing information?
- Will you be trying to coordinate spontaneous reporting, or will you make a plan in advance with citizen journalists?
- Is there an out-of-the-box tool you can use to compile reports, or will you need to make something of your own?
- What's your media plan/outreach plan? Live reporting campaigns tend to get as much press for the technology they use as for the issues they are raising. How will you manage this kind of media attention and the increase in reports it might bring?
- For live reporting to have a strong impact, it must be connected to a timely or hot issue. What's the timely event you can use to best engage your audience?
- Consider the appropriate use of live reporting tools. What context does something like Ushahidi work best in? What limitations does it have for your campaign?
- How can you avoid the problem that some of these systems only work when there are a lot of people become involved?

### Different ways you can do this

- 1 You can use mobile reporting to draw collective attention to an issue. Ask people to answer questions related to your campaign by sending in text messages or photos with their mobile phones. You can share these reports on a website or a mobile phone accessible website.
- 2 Live reporting can keep advocates safe during a protest or action. Two tools people have used for this are Twitter and a mobile video program called Qik.com, with which advocates can share text and video updates on who may have been arrested, and draw attention to this news from supporters around the world.
- 3 If mass media are not listening, or if your campaign faces censorship, advocates can use tools like Twitter or Ushahidi to report on direct actions. These reports can be used to leverage international media attention.
- 4 If you have a fast connection to the internet, you can use live video to broadcast a campaign event live to the internet with a computer, a video camera (which may be built into your computer), and a live video program like Ustream.tv or Livestream.com.
- 5 You can protect information from being confiscated by sharing it across a network of trusted supporters. If people have captured photos or videos they can share them with others located outside of the risk area by phone-to-phone file transfer, or by email, and can then delete them from their phones.

## FEATURED TOOL

### Live reporting and managing your contacts

FrontlineSMS (<http://www.frontlinesms.org>) allows large numbers of people to communicate without an internet connection. Advocates can use FrontlineSMS to send messages from their laptops over mobile phone networks, which are received as text messages. It can be used for both one-way and two-way communication. Advocates have used FrontlineSMS for human rights monitoring, organising protests, conducting public surveys, and emergency alerts. An active online community provides various support to first-time users.



## TIPS

### KEN BANKS OF FRONTLINESMS, ON COLLABORATION:

*"Using technologies, you can combine the collective voice of people. You can aggregate information from live reporting with news coming in from the mainstream. Bringing that all together you get a much bigger picture of what is happening on the ground."*

### DINA MEHTA, TECHNOLOGY RESEARCHER, ON THE POWER OF COMMUNITY:

*"We have communities that we have developed over time in several spaces on the web – on blogs, Facebook, Twitter. What these tools allow you to do is network with all of your online communities, to operate as hubs of connected people. So when something happens and you need to respond, it's about the spontaneous mobilisation of a community that already exists online, through the multiple nodes and hubs that you have created as you leave your footprints on the web."*

### SAMI GHARBIA, OF GLOBAL VOICES, ON LIVE REPORTING ARRESTS:

*"Activists are using Twitter to alert their fellow bloggers and activists about the case of arrests of bloggers. We've seen the case of a US journalist who was witnessing a demonstration in Mahala city in Egypt during the 6th April strike. When he was arrested he just sent a message to Twitter with the text "arrested" and that alerted his friends, his relatives, and even the US embassy to intervene and get him released from prison."*