VOTO

More Voices. Better Choices.

VOTO Mobile: messaging and polling past language barriers

CRS ICT4D   March 2013

More Voices. Better Choices.

What is VOTO?

- VOTO's Inspiration
- The Challenge
- A Solution
- The Team
- Applications & Examples

- Demo:
  - Subscribers
  - Messaging
  - Survey building
  - Scheduling
  - Results
- Future brainstorm

VOTO's Inspiration

District Government: Yendi, Chereponi, etc.

VOTO's Inspiration

Staff from EWB Canada: 5 years of experience:

- Partnering with local governments and organisations

- Collecting and using data for decision-making

- ICT Tools to support

The Challenge

[Accountability?]

Transparency

Participation
Priorities
Needs
Ideas
Feedback

"Similarly, the testimonials were very clear about what some of the enablers people require. They include **access to information**, **meaningful participation**, quality education & training, **access to grassroots focussed infrastructure**, quality health care, access to productive assets, food security and other social services."

- **Hearing on Peoples' Perspectives For A Post-MDGs Development Framework**, *October 2012 (Ghana, Liberia, Mozambique, Kenya, South Africa)* http://post2015.org/2012/10/26/joining-the-dots-peoples-perspective-for-a-post-mdgs-development-framework/

Why is there a problem?

- Either:

  1. Assemblies, NGOs and CSOs **are not interested** in transparency and participation, OR

  2. They **are**, but there are challenges: distance, resources, language, literacy, donor constraints...

How to address it?

- How does this happen elsewhere?
  - Online: government reports and databases
    - Still challenges: Gov. of Canada just [re-attempted a do-over of an open data platform](#)
  - Petition and advocacy sites like [leadnow.ca](#)
  - Polling orgs like Pew Research and Gallup
  - Long-form census

- In Ghana: this would only be accessible to a literate few with computers

How can we improve communication/feedback with (*all*) Ghanaians, on a massive scale?

A solution?

- Ghana challenges:
  - Rural distances
  - MANY languages
  - Low literacy

- Opportunities:
  - Incredible mobile usage
    - 25,618,427 SIMs
    - 24,965,816 people
  - And good accessibility

http://www.nca.org.gh/40/105/Market-Share-Statistics.html
https://www.google.com.gh/search?q=population+of+ghana

A solution?

- Can we use people's existing mobile phones to?
  - ***Distribute crucial information***
  - ***Gather input*** *and* ***allow people to have their voice heard***
  - Enable mechanisms for accountability and responsiveness.

Learning iterations

1. Simple SMS polling
   - Doesn't reach the key people we need to hear from!

2. Voice polling
   - Surveying is one part of the broader communication challenges facing gov. and CSOs.
   - *Especially*: possibilities for behaviour change around education and health, etc.
   - Need a general-purpose tool (not a solution) that can be used for any kind of two-way voice communication challenge

Learning iterations: Now

3. General purpose tool for sharing and gathering info via voice:

- ***Sharing info***: InfoLink
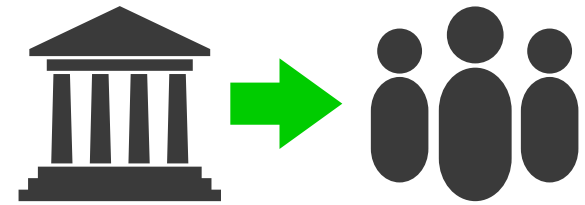
- ***Gathering input***: SurveyLink
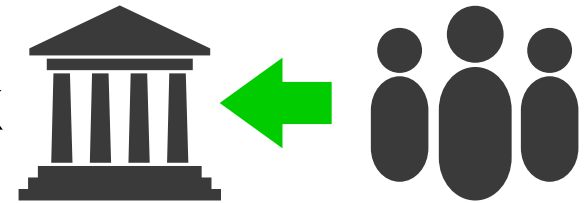
- ***Call-in service***: OpenLink
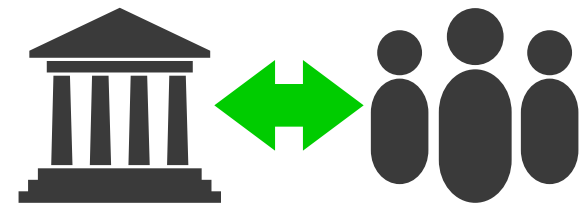
Potential Users

- **Local government**: engage citizens, offer transparency, and determine priorities
- **CSOs**: monitor projects and get feedback
- **Journalists**: poll popular opinion, do research
- **Businesses**: advertise to and get feedback from customers.

Questions we are testing now:

- **Q1:** Does enabling local government with these tools actually lead to more accountable decision-making and citizen engagement?

- **Q2:** Can we validate that timely, appropriate messaging can lead to behaviour change?

The Team

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Applications

InfoLink
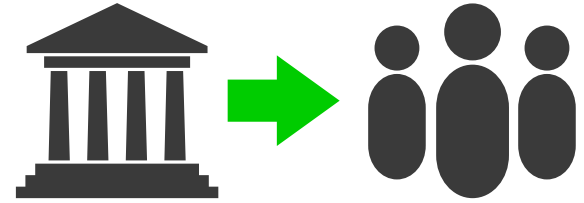
- Outgoing SMS or voice announcements.
  - *Examples:*
    - Deliver maternal health information to pregnant women who don't have easy access to clinics
    - Issue emergency or health notifications
    - Remind people about assembly meetings
    - Communicate with customers

SurveyLink
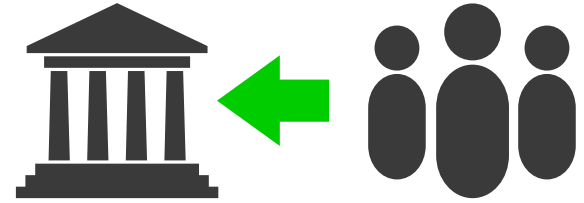
- Interactive SMS or voice surveys.
  - *Examples:*
    - Determine people's priorities for planning
    - Monitor the quality of the service your company provides
    - Evaluate projects by asking people about their experience

OpenLink
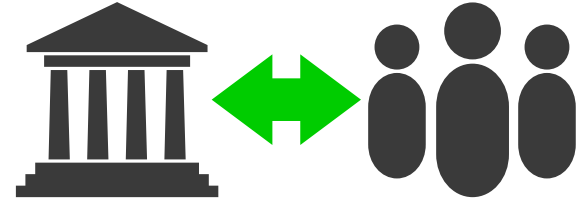
- Citizen-driven reporting via SMS or voice message
  - *Examples:*
    - Report broken infrastructure
    - Request service
    - Ask questions to representatives
    - Report corruption

Examples

InfoLink: Maternal Health

- ***Serving***: 3360 expecting mothers
  (rural areas, low clinic access, mostly not literate)

- ***Each week***, each mother automatically receives two calls in her language with information on:
  - Stage of her pregnancy
  - Things to keep her baby healthy
  - Things to do to keep herself healthy

- Learn about and sign up for service at regional clinics/ hospitals

InfoLink: Maternal Health

- ***Starting:*** *Beginning of March 2013*

- ***Impact:***
  - Improved health of mothers and children
  - ex: Fewer deaths due to malaria from better knowledge and prevention

- **To Test:**
  - Can we measure if mothers make healthier choices as a result of the messages?
  - Use SurveyLink to ask if they trust the messages and feel more comfortable in their pregnancy.

SurveyLink: Journalism: Role of MPs

- Will MPs be elected on "bribe"-type promises or their manifesto and vision for the country?
    - Common misunderstanding of role of MPs
    - Exploited by MPs for getting votes
- National survey of Ghanaians around election issues and what they believe the role of MPs should be.

SurveyLink: Journalism: Role of MPs

- Ran one week before election

- English, Twi, Ewe, Dagbani

- Randomly generated phone numbers to get sample of people across the country

- 1600 answered the call (lots of voicemails)

- 400 people passed language selector and answered at least one question

- **Incentive**: chance to win 50 GHC in airtime

International Institute of ICT Journalism

Surveylink: Journalism: Role of MPs

Please, what language do you understand best?

English, 79
20%

Dagbani, 11
3%

Ewe, 21
5%

Twi, 288
72%
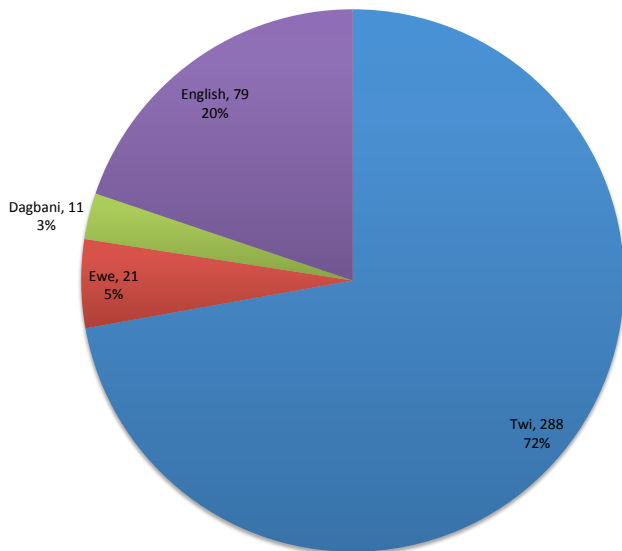
Are you a woman or a man?

Woman, 37
35%

Man, 68
65%
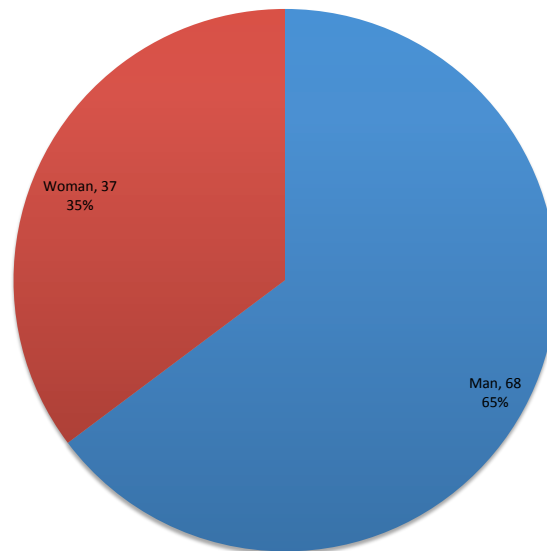
Are you living in a city or a village?

Village, 26
25%

City, 79
75%
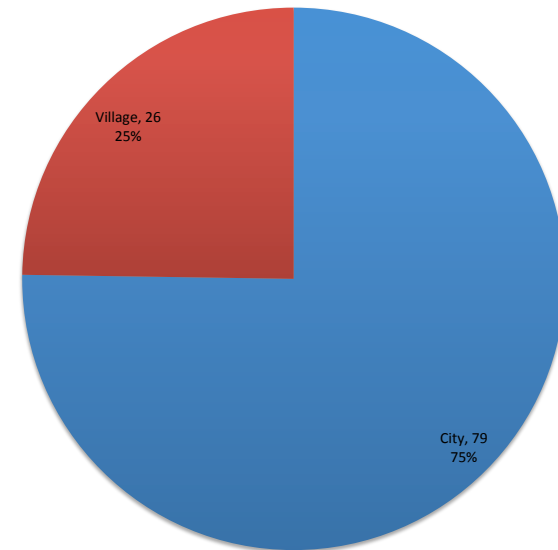
Please, what is the most important issue in this election?

Please, what is the most important issue in this election?

Issue	Man	Woman
Jobs	22%	9%
Corruption	25%	30%
Education	29%	21%
Transparency	14%	12%
Healthcare	8%	15%
Roads	2%	12%
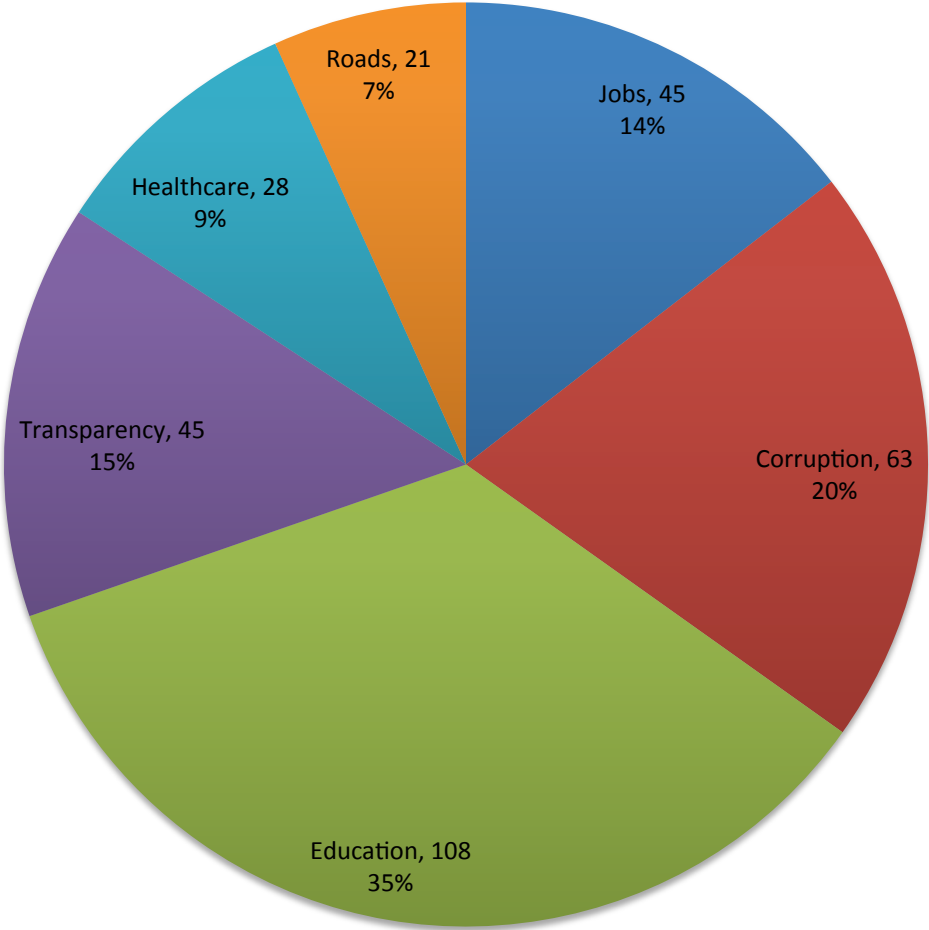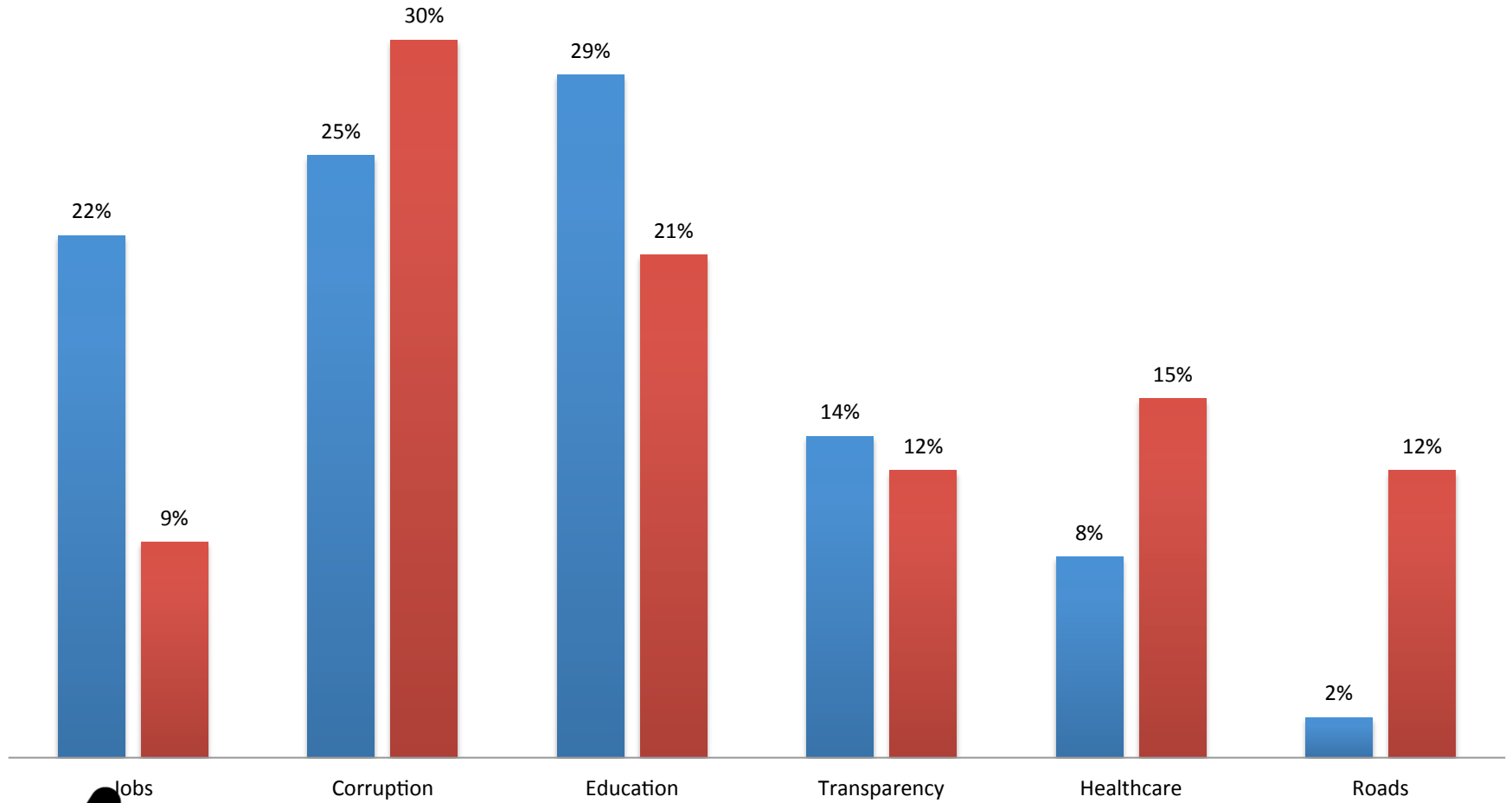
What is the proper role of MPs?
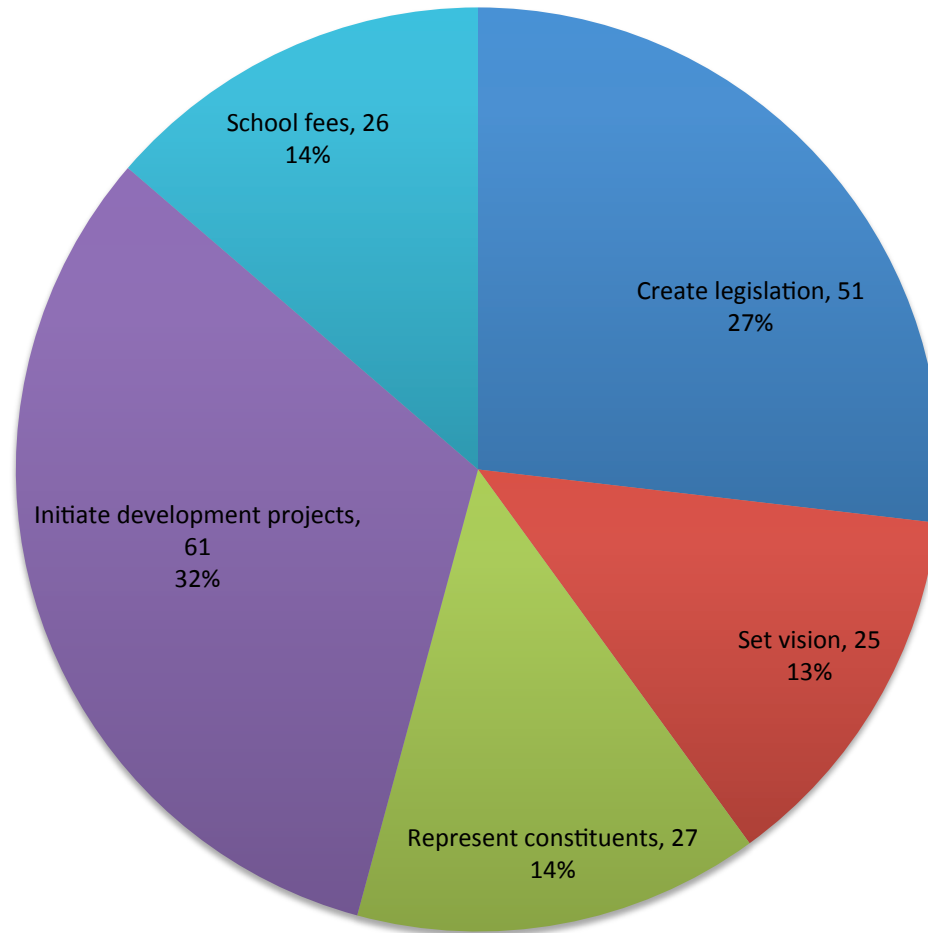
Demo

go.votomobile.org

(You can make an account and start here today.)
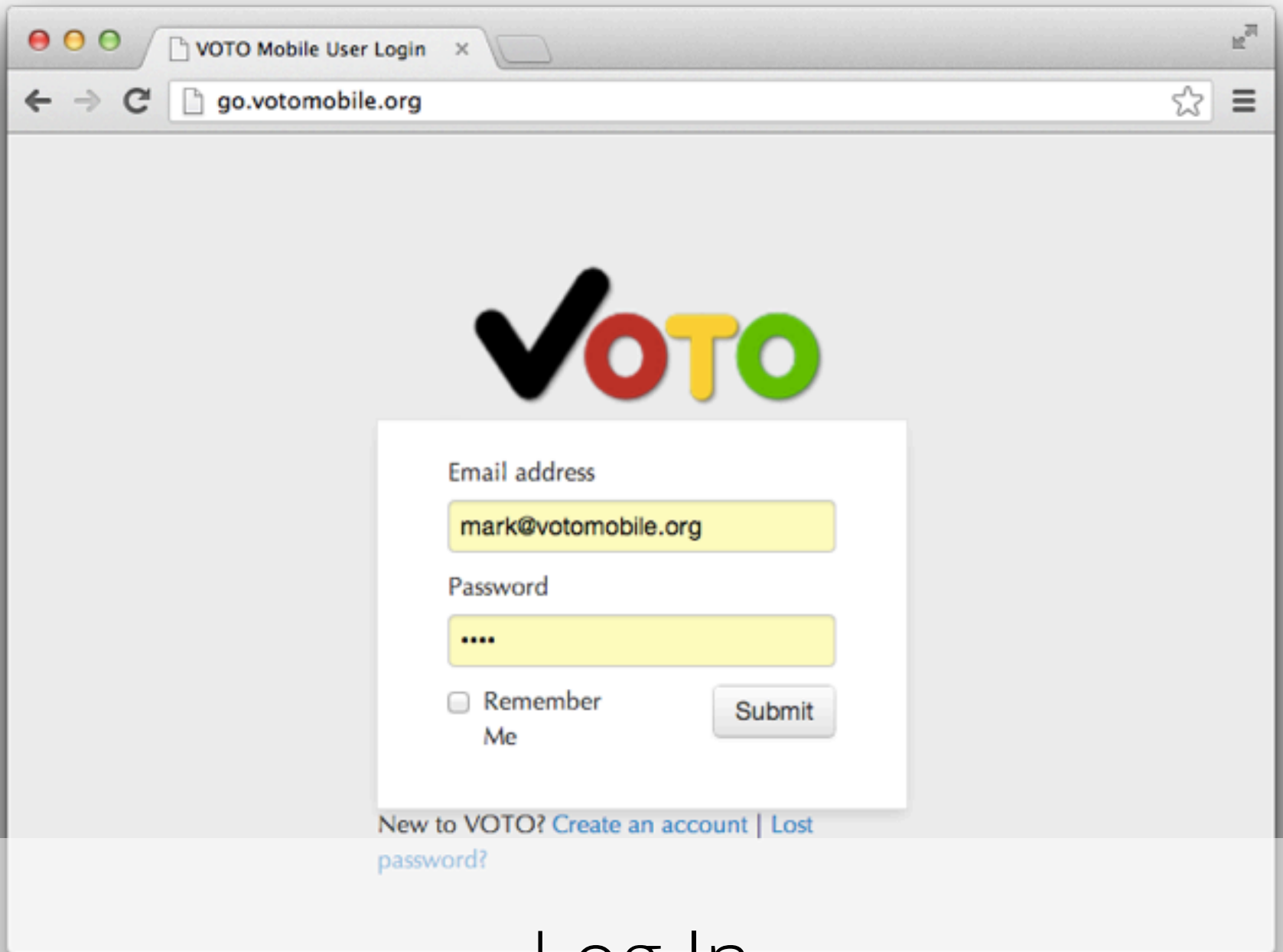
Log In

Register a new organisation

Add subscribers

Import Many Subscribers

Import Many Subscribers

Record a message

Target and send out a call

Schedule calls

Build a survey

Record survey audio

Send out a survey

View survey results

Monitor call status

See how subscribers engage

What makes effective surveys?

Starting with VOTO

Using VOTO

1. Register for an account @ go.votomobile.org
   - Start building your messages and surveys
   - Gather and upload your subscribers
   - Do a small test
2. Purchase VOTO Credit
3. Launch your campaign

Pricing

	Government	Non-profit	Business	Open-source
Up to 50,000 minutes	$0.06 /min	$0.08 /min	$0.12 /min	Free
Additional minutes	$0.10 /min	$0.12 /min	$0.18 /min	Free
Cloud service	✔	✔	✔	✖ Hardware and airtime required
Support	Unlimited	Unlimited	10 hours free	None

VOTO

Simple pay-per-usage pricing
Start tomorrow with no upfront costs

Future Brainstorm

Upcoming Features

- Send Voice and/or SMS
- Call-in/flash-in system (OpenLink)
  - Register for services (like Savannah Signatures)
  - Access past messages / menus of information
  - Do surveys
  - Connect to an operator's phone
  - Leave messages / request service

Some Questions we're trying to explore

- ***Who are we ignoring?*** How to bridge that gap?
  - Women's/children's voices?
  - Income-level
  - Geography: mobile coverage?
- What is the best incentive for survey participation? [income bias?]
- Is our system understandable to rural, non-literate people? How to improve understandability?
- Will people be more or less honest when answering an anonymous computer system, especially for shameful or embarrassing questions?
- How does different phrasing of messages affect uptake (imperative, informative, passive questioning, etc.)?

Some Questions we're trying to explore

- What should our business model be?

- What will it take to build trust/brand recognition/ subscriber relationships?
  - People value the opportunity to have their voice heard, vs.
  - Being disturbed by spam phone calls

- What scale do we need to be successful?

- Can we be scalable and financially profitable without being impact-successful? What would that be?

Thanks!

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