VOTO

More Voices. Better Choices.

VOTO: Mobile tools to listen and share information across barriers

CRS ICT4D   March 2013

More Voices. Better Choices.

VOTO

What is VOTO?

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

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

VOTO's Inspiration

District Governments: Yendi, Chereponi, etc.

VOTO's Inspiration

Alumni from EWB Canada: 5 years of experience:

- Partnering with local governments and organisations
- Collecting and using data for decision-making
- ICT Tools to support

Sponsor an African Child spreadsheet

Why does a brand new school in northern Ghana get built next to one with a leaky roof? Because the planning process is broken.

Our approach to improving village infrastructure like schools starts with spreadsheets.

By training Ghanaian planners and engineers to use data-driven planning, they have the tools to optimize resources - repairing and maintaining old schools and building new ones only when needed.

This is how engineers have real impact on the root causes of poverty.

It's not sexy. It works.

The Challenge

[Accountability?]

Transparency

Participation
Priorities
Needs
Ideas
Feedback

MEASURING SOCIAL IMPACT

Listening to Those Who Matter Most, the Beneficiaries

The views and experiences of the people who benefit from social programs are often overlooked and underappreciated, even though they are an invaluable source of insight into a program's effectiveness.

SHARE   PRINT   DOWNLOAD   ORDER REPRINTS   COMMENT   RELATED STORIES

By Fay Twersky, Phil Buchanan, & Valerie Threlfall | 4 💬 | Spring 2013

Why don't we listen to beneficiaries?

- It's expensive

- It's difficult to get responses

- It makes us uncomfortable

http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/listening_to_those_who_matter_most_the_beneficiaries

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http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/listening_to_those_who_matter_most_the_beneficiaries

"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. GOV, Donors, NGOs and CSOs **are not interested** in transparency and participation, OR

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

Why is there a problem?

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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

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A solution?

- How 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!
   - (Nation-wide test: response rate 1.5%)

Learning iterations

2. Voice polling
   – Nation-wide test, 4 languages: 25% response rate
   – BUT: 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 sector solution) that can be used for any kind of two-way voice communication challenge
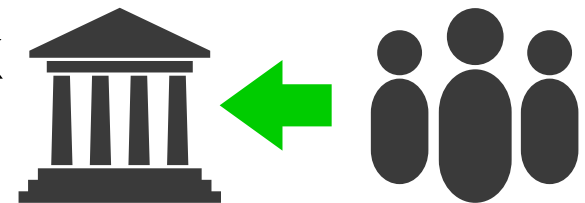
Learning iterations: Now

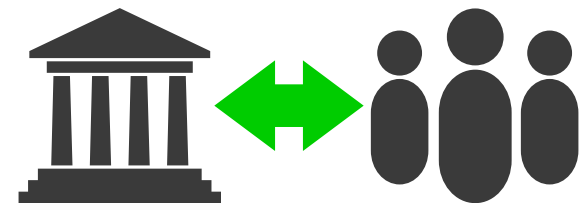3. General purpose tool for sharing and gathering info via voice and/or SMS
   - *Sharing info*: InfoLink
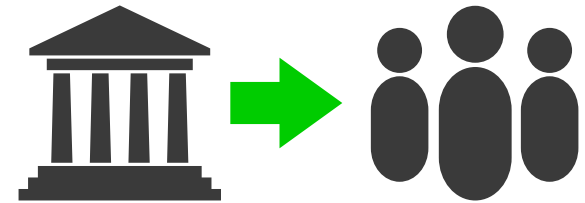
   - *Gathering input*: SurveyLink

   - *Call-in service*: OpenLink

Potential Users

- **Local government**: engage citizens, offer transparency, and determine priorities

- **NGOs**: baseline surveys, planning, M&E, behaviour change, transparency

- **Journalists**: poll popular opinion, do research

- **Businesses**: advertise 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 enable behaviour change?

- **Q3:** How do we scale this?

The Team

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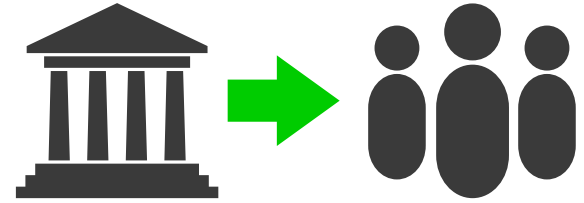& Alloysius Attah*
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KNUST

co-founders,

*George Arthur
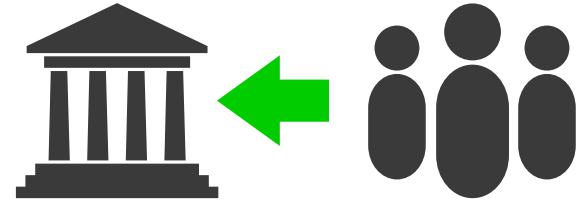Sarpong*
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Applications

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/ community visits
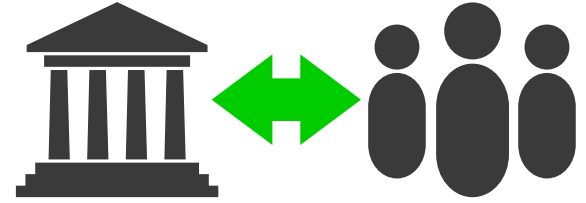   - Communicate with customers

SurveyLink

- Interactive SMS or voice surveys.
  - *Examples:*
    - Determine community members' priorities for planning
    - Monitor the quality of service delivery
    - 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/leave a message
    - 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
  - Suggestions to keep her baby healthy
  - Suggestions to keep herself healthy

- Learn about and sign up for service at regional clinics OR register by 'flashing' a number seen through advertising

InfoLink: Maternal Health

- **Starting:** *Beginning of April 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

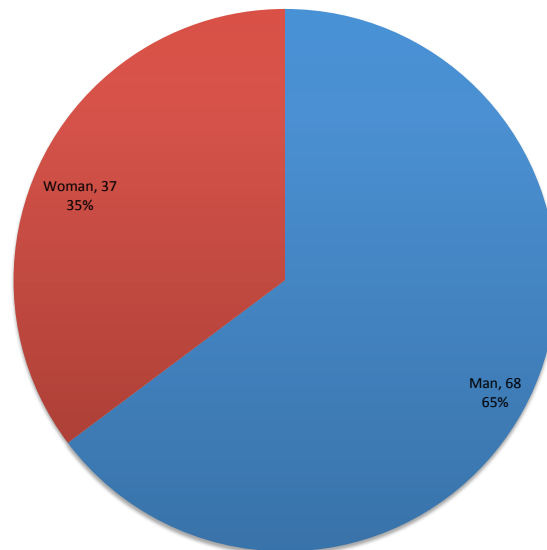- **Incentive**: chance to win 50 GHC in airtime
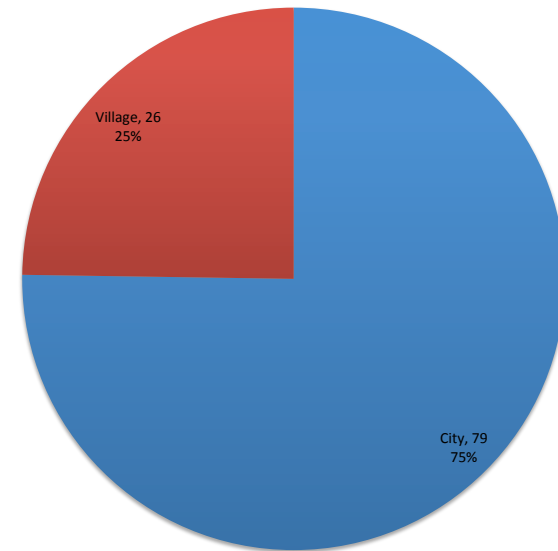
Surveylink: Journalism: Role of MPs

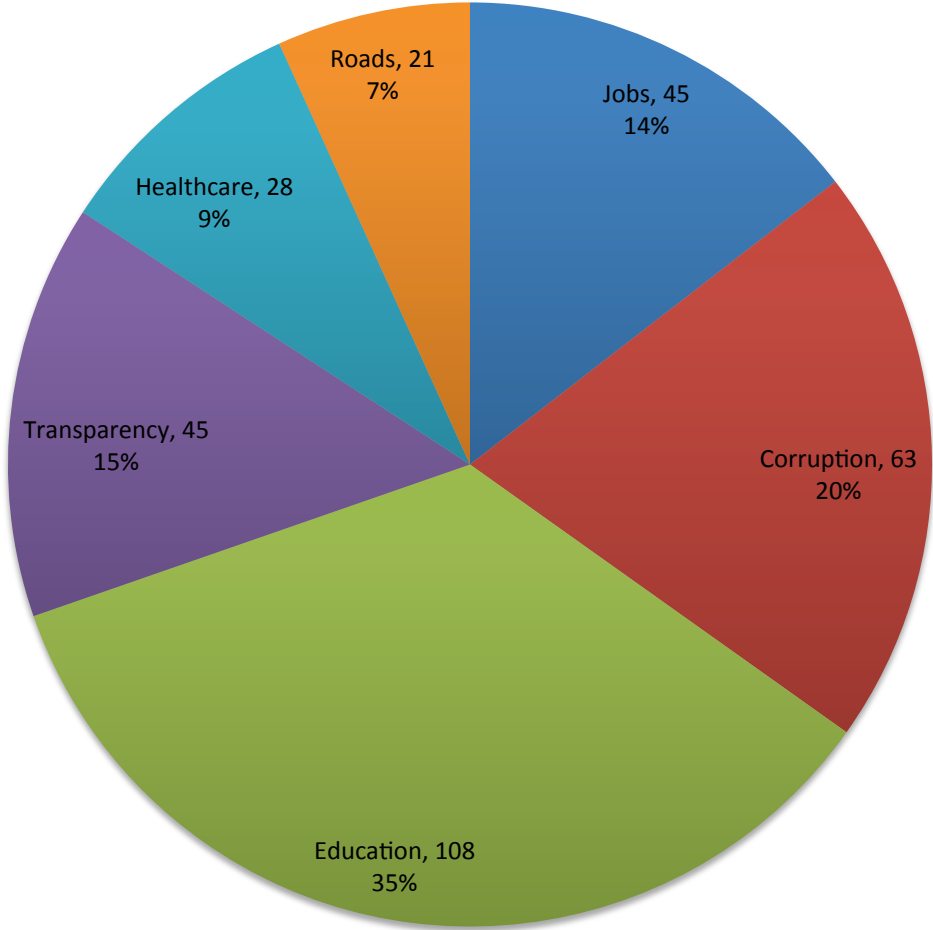**Please, what language do you understand best?**

- English, 79 — 20%
- Dagbani, 11 — 3%
- Ewe, 21 — 5%
- Twi, 288 — 72%
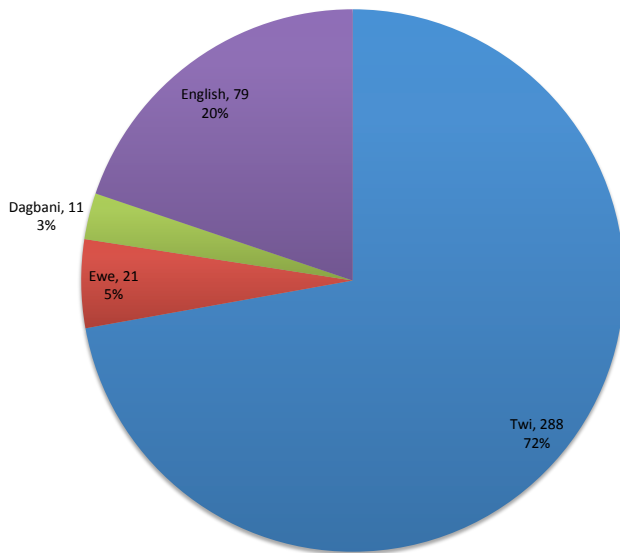
Are you a woman or a man?

- 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?

- Roads, 21 — 7%
- Jobs, 45 — 14%
- Corruption, 63 — 20%
- Education, 108 — 35%
- Transparency, 45 — 15%
- Healthcare, 28 — 9%

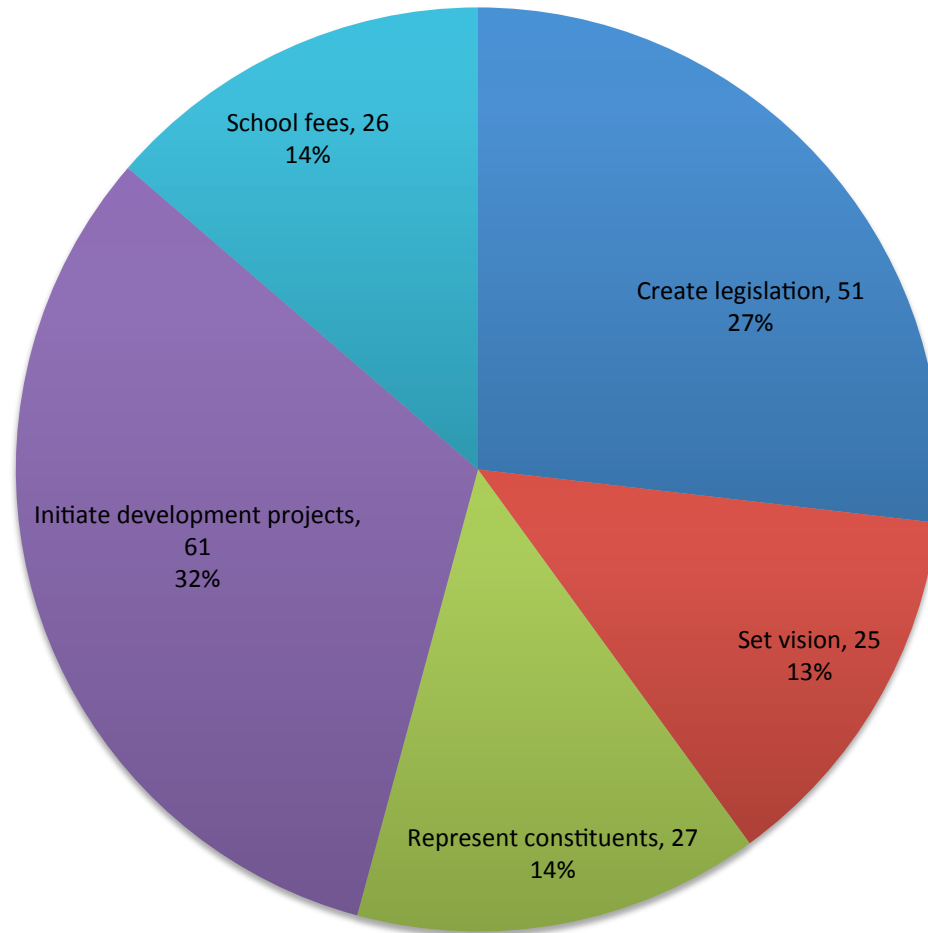# Please, what is the most important issue in this election?

■ Man ■ Woman
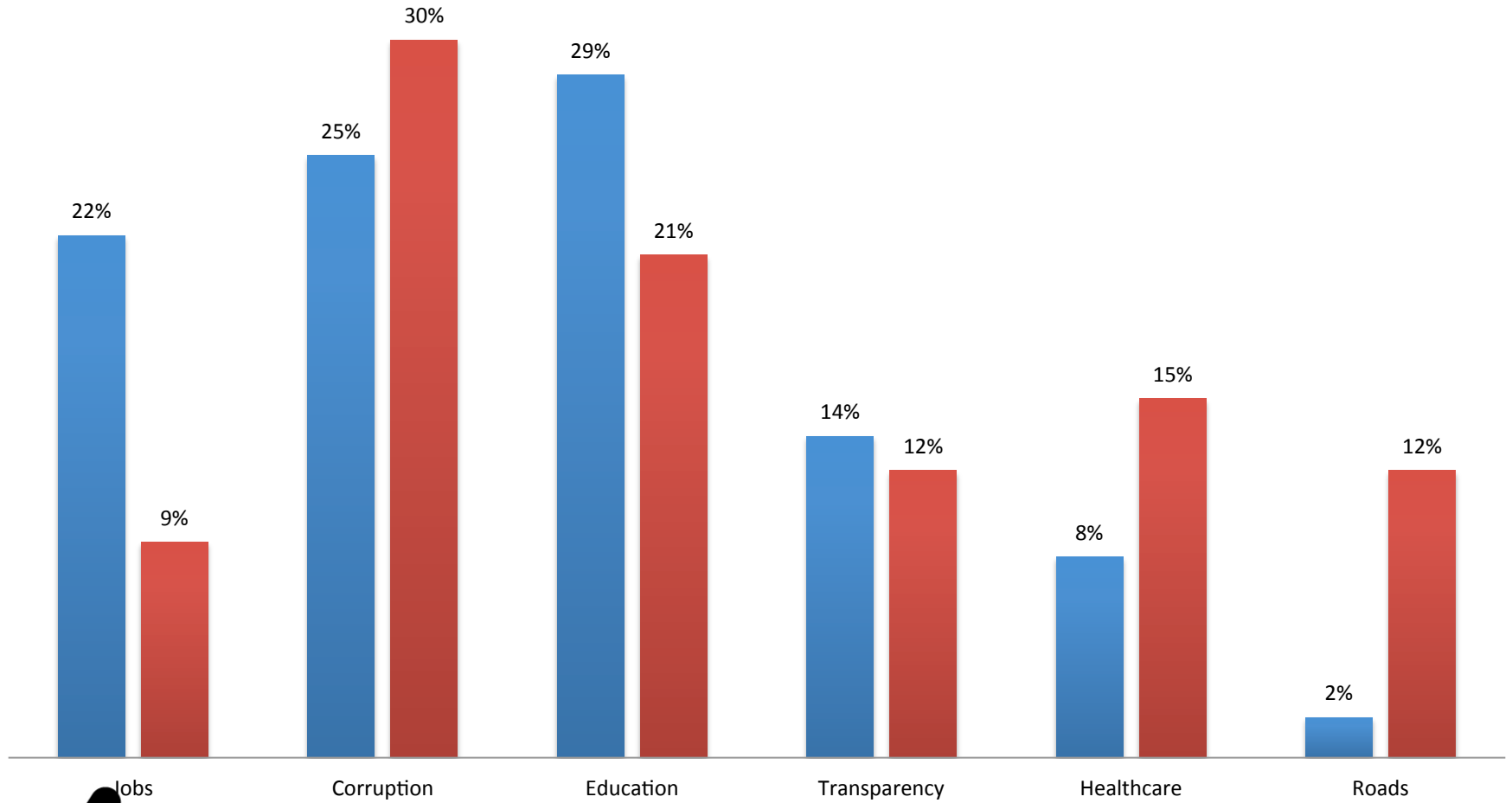
What is the proper role of MPs?

- Create legislation, 51 — 27%
- Set vision, 25 — 13%
- Represent constituents, 27 — 14%
- Initiate development projects, 61 — 32%
- School fees, 26 — 14%

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Demo

go.votomobile.org

Create an account and start today!

Flash to register

023 609 5650

or

+233 26 609 5650

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

- Simple pay-per-minute pricing

- Differentiated pricing for gov., NGO, business

- Start tomorrow with no up-front costs

- Includes:

  - Unlimited training / technical support

  - Extreme responsiveness and commitment to learning

  - Defined reliability and uptime commitments

Future Brainstorm

Upcoming Features

- Add SMS for SurveyLink

- 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

Upcoming Features

- Multiple question types
(open responses/voice messages for qualitative feedback)

- Interoperability

  – API to send/receive Calls/SMS from your own system

  – Plenty of export options

What does this need to be?

- … To be useful for you?

- What should we be thinking about?

- What does the future need from us?

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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?

Summary

- VOTO is designed for ***direct, accessible*** beneficiary engagement.

- General tool for information/participation/ feedback

  - *not a sector-specific application*

- You can start using it tomorrow

  - (*In Ghana; Give us ~1 week in other countries.)

Thanks!

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