



Ushahidi, which means “testimony” in Swahili, is a platform that was initially developed to map reports of violence in Kenya after the post-election fallout at the beginning of 2008.

The Ushahidi Story

The volunteer team behind Ushahidi rapidly developed a tool for Kenyans to report and map incidents of violence that they saw via SMS, email or the web. Within a week Ushahidi had gone from idea to live deployment.

Ushahidi now serves as a prototype and a lesson for what can be done by combining crisis information from citizen-generated reports, media and NGOs and mashing that data up with geographical mapping tools.

The team behind Ushahidi became an organization that created a free and open source mapping and content management system which can be used by organizations worldwide in similar crisis-related situations. The main goal of the organization is to create a system

that facilitates early warning systems and helps in data visualization for response and recovery.

The Ushahidi platform has been used to monitor elections in India, Mexico, Lebanon and Afghanistan. It has been deployed in the DR Congo to track unrest, Zambia to monitor medicine stockouts and the Philippines to track the mobile phone companies.

Thinking Mobile

A key component of Ushahidi is the ability to use mobile phones as a primary means of both sending crisis incidents and receiving updates. The Internet can be difficult to access or completely unavailable in some parts of the world, so the platform was created with the mobile phone as a foundational element.

How to get involved:

From PHP developers to mapping gurus, we need your help!

Programmers

We’ve got a host of world-class challenges to overcome in order to make Ushahidi work all over the globe. Speed, stability and simplicity are always key components, but there are some areas that take even more work to do right. Some examples:

- Low-bandwidth interaction
- Server-side map clustering
- Internationalization
- Plugin architecture
- Themes and theme architecture
- Javascript

Non-tech Volunteers

Besides the technology, there is an increasing need for people to do things to help the greater community of Ushahidi users and the organization itself by doing:

- Case studies
- User interviews
- Multimedia
- Community building
- Country deployments

Swift River

Swift is an initiative that came out of the Ushahidi community that seeks to do two very important things, both of which are crucial for not just Ushahidi, but for many emergency response activities in the future. First, it gathers as many possible streams of data about a particular crisis event as possible. Second, using a two-part filter, that stream of data is filtered through both machine based algorithms and humans to better understand the veracity and level of importance of any piece of information.

www.swiftapp.org

Need	Features	Functionality
A system that can be deployed in the field with a minimum of fuss	Open standards and open source based system	The platform can be set up within a couple hours.
Robust and flexible database	Designed to accommodate data collection templates Information qualification built in	The database is setup to scale and meet requirements for different types or organizations. The API allows for interaction with multiple types of applications
Robust template based structured input	Administrator can setup basic templates for multiple types of organizations and operations	Ushahidi's Beta supports a basic custom form creation template that can be utilized by any administrator.
Information verification / qualification for better analysis and decision support	Qualification of information sources before plotting on the map ensures that decision makers do not received unverified crowdsourced or web-based information	Verified and unverified information can be visualized. Open modification of the system allows for multiple types of visualizations of this data.
Mobile based data entry and input in austere conditions	SMS input as well as smartphone and data-enabled support.	Mobile applications for J2ME, WinMo and Android. Future support of FrontlineSMS Forms is planned.
Emphasis on accurate location data	Designed to accommodate industry standard KML geo-referencing standards	Features OpenLayers, supporting Google, Yahoo, Microsoft and OSM. KML/GeorSS support included.
Reporting and analytics	Export of information in the system is simple for offline storage or population of new instance	Currently all the data can be exported via XML using the API. A mass-export feature is available within the administrative area.
Secure database with the greatest possible access to information entry by outside parties	On disk and over the wire encryption.	SMS is only as secure as the network it operates on. The database is secure, and can support added security depending on the deployment.
A system capable of cataloguing text, audio and video	Is capable of featuring photos and video in addition to text based reports from the field	With the increased use of multimedia, the platform was built to support images and video. This is all easy to sort through the interface.

The Ushahidi engine is there for "everyday" people to let the world know what is happening in their area during a crisis, emergency or other situation. Bringing awareness, linking those in need to those who can assist, and providing the framework for better visualization of information graphically.

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Ushahidi is supported by a global community of volunteers. In addition to these generous people, Ushahidi is also proud to be supported by the following organizations:

