

**MOBILE PHONES AND FAHAMU: AN EVOLUTION  
IN POLITICAL COMMUNICATION**

**A Directed Research Project**

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

The use of social media—broadly defined as the use of computer- and Internet-based communications technologies for sharing, interaction and cooperation—has exponentially increased in the last ten years. The use of technologies such as the Internet, RSS feeds, YouTube, e-mail, SMS text messaging, mobile phones, blogs, content aggregators, to name a few, has become commonplace worldwide in diverse areas of human activity such as commerce, government and politics, entertainment, art and academic study.

Howard Rheingold, an American media scholar noted for his writings that explore the cultural and political implications of modern communications media, has been chronicling the explosion of social change that has occurred in the last decade-and-a-half due to widespread proliferation of social media technologies. Rheingold describes an evolving phenomenon arising from convergences of communications technology and a growing culture of popular participation. There has been a flowering of grassroots-oriented organizations demonstrating and sharing strategies and tools using communications technology in civic and political activism. “Smart mobs” are people who cooperate in ways never before possible because they carry devices that possess both communication and computing capabilities, such as mobile phones. According to Rheingold, smart mob technology

... has led to the eruption of subcultures in Europe and Asia. At least one government has fallen.... Adolescent mating rituals, political activism, and corporate management styles have mutated in unexpected ways.<sup>1</sup>

There is widespread discussion today on the tremendous potential of social media technologies for transforming societies worldwide. Observers like Rheingold assert that the world is in the midst of a technological and communications revolution. The proliferation and ever-increasing accessibility of social media technologies coupled with the coming of age of the generation that grew up knowledgeable and comfortable with Internet and social media technologies holds tremendous implications across all sectors of society all over the world. Such a significant development deserves a close and critical examination.

### **Statement of Purpose and Objectives**

It is a common assertion that social media technologies have utterly transformed communications. These technologies have allowed for new ways of quickly communicating, organizing and mobilizing for people and organizations that were not feasible before the advent of these technologies. This thesis project explores the application of social media technology in activism and civil society. This project describes, analyzes and assesses an example of a social media application through a case study of one organization's experience with using a particular type of social media technology, mobile phone text messaging, in particular areas of its work.

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<sup>1</sup> Howard Rheingold. *Smart Mobs: The Next Social Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Basic Books, 2002), xi.

My central research question is: can the use of social media technology make activist groups more effective in reaching their objectives?

This study aims to discover evidence whether it can, and to find some suggestions on where, how and with what combination of circumstances, methods and resources it might work.

### **Study Significance**

This study is significant because very little academic research has been done on the application of social media technologies in political and social activism. There is plenty of academic research in the fields of sociology, anthropology, information science, business, and other fields on the uses, impact and applications of social media. Much of the published materials on social media and activism, however, come not from scholars but from activists and other practitioners in the field who are actively using and experimenting with these technologies and sharing best practices among one another. Examples of these organizations and activists are MobileActive, Fahamu, Justin Oberman and Katrin Verclas who are cited in Chapter 2 and 3 of this paper. They are based primarily in North America although the phenomenon of social media use in activism is worldwide, as illustrated in the case studies found on the MobileActive wiki, [http://www.mobileactive.org/wiki/index.php?title=Main\\_Page#Case Studies: Innovative uses of mobile phones in campaigns.](http://www.mobileactive.org/wiki/index.php?title=Main_Page#Case_Studies:_Innovative_uses_of_mobile_phones_in_campaigns.)<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> MobileActive. Case Studies: Innovative uses of mobile phones in campaigns, [http://www.mobileactive.org/wiki/index.php?title=Main\\_Page#Case Studies: Innovative uses of mobile phones in campaigns](http://www.mobileactive.org/wiki/index.php?title=Main_Page#Case_Studies:_Innovative_uses_of_mobile_phones_in_campaigns) (accessed April 28, 2007).

In particular, very few scholarly works focus on the increasingly popular use of mobile phones in activism, especially in the Global South—areas of the world where the penetration of mobile phones significantly dwarfs the use of Internet technology. This study, therefore, seeks to lay the groundwork for future research and to help lay a foundation for scholarship in this crucial area of social development.

### **Study Background**

In recent years, the deployment of mobile phones as tools in political mobilization and activism in some countries has gained some attention from the mainstream media. The most celebrated cases of activist success via cell phone mobilization were the toppling of the administration of President Joseph Estrada in the Philippines (also known as the People Power II revolution); the election and restoration to the presidency following impeachment of Roh Moo-hyun in South Korea where text messaging and the Internet-driven alternative media were instrumental; and in Kuwait, where text messaging and Blackberries were used by women to mobilize in record numbers to win the right to vote.<sup>3</sup>

Such dramatic success stories give rise to interest about the effectiveness of this new tool. Have similar uses been made of mobile phones in other places and in other ways, and with what effect? How does one measure and determine success—are

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<sup>3</sup> Cathy Hong, "New Political Tool: Text Messaging," June 30, 2005, Christian Science Monitor, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/0630/p13s01-stct.htm> (accessed March 20, 2007).



quantifiable metrics and measures of audience engagement sufficient or appropriate?

How can its contribution to social change be determined and tracked?

Mainstream media reports on mobile phone activism focus on the drama, the techniques and methods that produce spectacular and compelling results. Journalist Mary Jordan, for example, sees cell phones and text messaging changing the ways that political mobilization is done around the world:

From Manila to Riyadh and Kathmandu protests once publicized on coffeehouse bulletin boards are now organized entirely through text-messaging networks that can reach vast numbers of people in a matter of minutes.<sup>4</sup>

What are the possibilities for the adoption of mobile phones as a conscious strategy for political and social activism? In other words, can the experience in the Philippines, South Korea, Kuwait, and others be replicated?

These few examples make a compelling case for studying social media—particularly mobile phones—in social and political activism. While much attention has been paid to the phenomenal power of social media technologies, very little actual research has been done to establish a baseline of knowledge about the effectiveness of such tools in action. This study, therefore, is an attempt to gain a foothold in this unfilled niche of scholarship.

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<sup>4</sup> Mary Jordan, "Going Mobile: Text Messages Guide Filipino Protesters," August 25, 2006, Washington Post, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/08/24/AR2006082401379\\_pf.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/08/24/AR2006082401379_pf.html) (accessed March 20, 2007).

## **Study Limitations**

This study is primarily concerned with the uses of texting and SMS mobile phone technology and the kinds of activities that lend themselves to these devices—by themselves as standalone devices or in combination with other types of social media such as blogging, video-sharing and the Internet.

This project looks mainly at the pioneering experience in 2004 of one organization, Fahamu, which was seeking to add the technology to its toolbox of communication strategies and techniques that its network of organizations working in Africa can adopt.

In particular, this study highlights explicitly political uses of mobile phones to mobilize constituents and populations for social change.

## **Study Overview**

Chapter 2 is a review of the current literature on the use of social media for social activism. Chapter 3 profiles Fahamu as an organization and the context for its use of mobile phone technology. Chapter 4 analyzes Fahamu as a case study and will explore the larger questions surrounding the use of social media such as mobile phones in political and social activism. Chapter 5 presents a summary of the study and suggests directions of future research.

## **Chapter II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter summarizes existing literature on the use of social media in social activism. Scholarly work considering the use of mobile phones in this field is still sparse. Much of the current published works and academic research are primarily focused on the Internet and its potential for mobilizing, information-sharing, research, and organizing. A review of scholarly literature specifically related to mobile phones and social activism and material based on the experience of practitioners concludes this chapter.

The use of social media—broadly defined as the use of computer and Internet-based communications technologies—has exponentially increased in the last ten years. The use of technologies such as the Internet, RSS feeds, YouTube, e-mail, SMS text messaging, cell phones, blogs, content aggregators, among others, has become commonplace and ubiquitous in modern life worldwide. Wikipedia—a free online encyclopedia built collaboratively by volunteers and, itself, an example of social media, defines the term as “online technologies and practices that people use for sharing opinions, insights, experiences, and perspectives.” Aside from Wikipedia, a few prominent examples of social media applications are MySpace (social networking), YouTube (video sharing), Second Life (virtual reality), Digg (news sharing), Flickr (photo sharing) and Miniclip (game sharing). These sites typically use technologies such

as blogs, message boards, podcasts, wikis, and vlogs to allow users to interact.<sup>5</sup> As social activist and author Alison H. Fine observes in *Momentum*:

A previously unimaginable amount of material is available to you online without ever having to leave your desk chair—and that material is increasingly available to you in your hand as you walk around.<sup>6</sup>

While much attention within activist communities is focused on the potential power of social media technologies for rallying and mobilizing people to effect change, Fine, in *Momentum*, argues that more than mere technological tools, social media can be used to establish, enhance, and strengthen social networks between people and organizations. Social media are inexpensive and widely accessible. One does not need to be have specialized technical skills to be able to learn to use these tools effectively. Social media can facilitate relationships and connections between people and organizations in order to fuel collective action.<sup>7</sup>

Activists and bloggers Jerome Armstrong and Markos Moulitsas in *Crashing the Gate* describe how they were part of a wave of progressive American activists who began organizing online in 2002 using tools such as the Internet, blogs and search engines. They did not have much money or political pedigree but that did not stop them from making their mark in American politics. Armstrong and Moulitsas, themselves, created two of the

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<sup>5</sup> Wikipedia, "Social Media," [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social\\_media](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_media) (accessed March 31, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> Fine, *Momentum*, 28.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

most influential and widely read political blogs in the world, circumventing traditional media and the political establishment.<sup>8</sup>

A growing body of work from various disciplines describes the implications of adoption of Internet and social media tools by activists and civil society organizations. Richard Kahn and Douglas Kellner, scholars from the University of California-Los Angeles, observe that the virtual world has emerged as a significant arena that did not previously exist for organizing, dissemination of information, and exchange of ideas and technology. This new arena has given new life to politics of both right and left. They are heartened by the possibilities of the application of these technologies to social movements that seek to promote more just and equitable alternative visions of society.<sup>9</sup>

Mark Surman and Katherine Reilly, researchers affiliated with the Social Science Research Council, however, adopt a more cautionary tone. They argue that most civil society organizations have not moved beyond the use of e-mail and Web sites as their primary engagement with the emerging technologies. Organizations have not fully embraced the strategic use of these technologies for various reasons and thus, their effectiveness and potential are stunted. Many examples abound, according to them, of organizations at the forefront of strategic use of these technologies—IndyMedia, Sarai/Waag Exchange, OneWorld, Jubilee 2000—which make full use of the capabilities of e-mail lists, websites, and databases. These types of organizations, according to

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<sup>8</sup> Jerome Armstrong and Markos Moulitsas, *Crashing the Gate: Netroots, Grassroots, and the Rise of People-Powered Politics* (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2006).

<sup>9</sup> Richard Kahn and Douglas Kellner, "New Media and Internet Activism: From the 'Battle of Seattle' to Blogging," *New Media and Society* 6, no.1 (2004): 87-95.

Surman and Reilly, however, are the exceptions, rather than the rule among civil society organizations.<sup>10</sup>

There is a growing body of research and experiential documentation on the use of the Internet among activists and practitioners. MobileActive.org is an example of what Surman and Reilly refer to as “social tech” organizations. According to them, these organizations are emerging groupings focused on a diversity of issues such as Internet rights, technology assistance, and volunteering. A common belief among these groups is that the Internet and related technologies hold great potential for civil society.<sup>11</sup>

## **Mobile Phones**

Compared to the literature on the use of the Internet, there is still little academic scholarship on the use of mobile, or cell, phones as tools for political activism. There is a wealth of material on cell phones in general as a communication tool, as the subject of anthropological inquiry, and as a piece of technology. Jonathan Donner, a researcher for Microsoft based in Bangalore, India has compiled a comprehensive review of research approaches to mobile phone technology in the developing world. His exercise revealed a variety of approaches—social, cultural, political, and economic—on the implications of mobile phone use in different countries. Much of the literature he reviewed concerned the

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<sup>10</sup> Mark Surman and Katherine Reilly, “Appropriating the Internet for Social Change: Towards the Strategic Use of Networked Technologies by Transnational Civil Society Organizations,” Social Science Research Council, November 2003, [http://www.ssrc.org/programs/itic/civ\\_soc\\_report/](http://www.ssrc.org/programs/itic/civ_soc_report/) (accessed March 25, 2007).

<sup>11</sup> Surman and Reilly, “Appropriating the Internet,” Executive summary, November 2003, [http://www.ssrc.org/programs/itic/civ\\_soc\\_report/](http://www.ssrc.org/programs/itic/civ_soc_report/) (accessed March 25, 2007).

commercial and social uses of cell phones. Scholarship on political uses of mobile phones focused mainly on the social and political context and its interplay with the technology.<sup>12</sup>

Okoth Frederick Mudhai, a researcher in international relations at Nottingham Trent University in the United Kingdom, likewise, observes that a great deal of literature and research on social media and activism focus largely on the Internet. He argues that more attention must be paid to the potential of mobile phones in mobilization and advocacy. He believes that coupling the capabilities for text messaging with other technologies such as radio carries great potential in developing the cell phone as a strategic tool for social and political activism.<sup>13</sup>

### **MobileActive: A Resource for Organizers**

MobileActive was formed in September, 2005 in Toronto, Canada, at a conference for activists worldwide who use mobile phones in their work. These activists have organized themselves as a loose confederation to share best practices, techniques, and case studies. MobileActive describes itself in its Web site as “a global network of people, tools, projects, and resources focused on the use of mobile phones for activism, campaigns, and civic engagement.” They explain their mission as fourfold: (1) to expand access to knowledge, ideas and experience about the use of mobile technology; (2) reduce learning costs for civil society organizations; (3) accelerate the use of effective tactics in

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<sup>12</sup> Jonathan Donner, “Research Approaches to Mobile Use in the Developing World: A Review of the Literature,” Paper presented at the International Conference on Mobile Communication and Asian Modernities, City University of Hong Kong, June 2005, <http://www.jonathandonner.com/donner-mobrev.pdf> (accessed March 25, 2007).

<sup>13</sup> Okoth Fredrick Mudhai, “Exploring the Potential for More Strategic Civil Society Use of Mobile Phones,” Social Science Research Council, 2003, [http://www.ssrc.org/programs/itic/publications/knowledge\\_report/memos.okoth.pdf](http://www.ssrc.org/programs/itic/publications/knowledge_report/memos.okoth.pdf) (accessed March 25, 2007).

campaigns; and (4) provide a comprehensive platform for building partnerships and for facilitating access to technology and funding. MobileActive.org seeks to establish a new model for a peer-learning network and knowledge community.<sup>14</sup>

The MobileActive web site contains a blog of recent events and news on mobile activism worldwide, a resource wiki with case studies on successful uses of cell phones in activism, downloadable reports and strategy guides on how to implement cell phone-based campaigns for advocacy, fundraising and voter registration.

### **Why Mobile Phones Click**

According to MobileActive, mobile phones are an ideal tool for social activism and mobilization for the following reasons: First, in many countries mobile phones are the easiest and least expensive way to get a phone line. Second, mobile phones are pervasive in developing countries (more than the Internet). Third, growing infrastructure in even highly remote and rural locations makes mobile phones accessible in the developing world, especially as prices of hardware and services continue to drop. Fourth, there is a relatively low learning curve to using a mobile phone, making it far more accessible than computers to a wider range of constituents. Fifth, mobile phones are highly personal and able to reach the target constituency directly and immediately. Because of these reasons, MobileActive contends that mobile phones are conducive to instant participation and response.

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<sup>14</sup> MobileActive, <http://mobileactive.org/> (accessed March 30, 2007).



Mobile phones can also make the handling of languages easier. Examples are of instant translation through distributed networks. Mobile phones are also easy to share—mobile phones are small, highly portable and accessible when on the move and in less secure environments. Finally, mobile phones are becoming hybrid communication tools with convergence with other media such as the Internet. Mobile phones allow for texting, still and video cameras, can carry games, music, ringtones and data.<sup>15</sup>

### **How Mobile Phones Are Used**

According to MobileActive, there are several ways that mobile phones have been used in campaigns worldwide. First is in *organizing* and *mobilizing*. This includes coordinating flash mobs, disseminating rapid alerts, creating and disseminating ring tones, moments of “unsilence,” disseminating mass voice messages, and signing people up for actions.

A second way in which mobile phones have been used is in *advocacy*. Examples include conducting SMS petitions, education on issues, conducting surveys, polling constituents or the public, lobbying legislators, building and maintaining membership/supporter lists, and fundraising.

A third way mobile phones have been used in campaigns is *providing and coordinating services*. Examples include disseminating urgent alerts/SOS and early warnings, coordinating emergency response and humanitarian relief, providing services

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<sup>15</sup> MobileActive, [http://www.mobileactive.org/wiki/index.php?title=Main\\_Page#What\\_is\\_Mobile\\_Activism.3F](http://www.mobileactive.org/wiki/index.php?title=Main_Page#What_is_Mobile_Activism.3F) (accessed March 31, 2007).

to constituents (translation, information, etc), menu-driven voice services and phone trees.

A fourth way is *monitoring*. This includes reporting corruption, human rights monitoring and reporting, documenting/monitoring with photos/video/sound, and environmental monitoring.

A fifth way relates specifically to *elections*. Examples of these activities include registering voters and getting out the vote, registering voters by requesting materials via mobile phone, educating voters on specific issues, turning out voters (reminders, polling place information, etc.).

A sixth way mobile phones have been used reflects the traditional use of the media—*disseminating information*: media and journalism. Examples include engaging in citizen journalism/reporting; reporting to community radio; audio, video and text blogging to web sites; access to community radio; news updates by voice or SMS; pre-recorded voice or audio and information call centers.<sup>16</sup>

## **Present Limits and Concerns**

MobileActive, however, cautions that there are significant challenges to using mobile phones in civil society. First, mobile phones have yet to sufficiently reach many rural areas. Second, coverage may be an issue. In many countries there are mobile operator monopolies, increasing costs and posing security risks. There may be social or

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<sup>16</sup> MobileActive, [http://www.mobileactive.org/wiki/index.php?title=MobileActive\\_Strategy\\_Guide\\_to\\_Using\\_Mobile\\_Phones\\_in\\_Civic\\_Campaigns#Why\\_are\\_mobile\\_phones\\_useful\\_for\\_activists\\_and\\_NGOs.3F](http://www.mobileactive.org/wiki/index.php?title=MobileActive_Strategy_Guide_to_Using_Mobile_Phones_in_Civic_Campaigns#Why_are_mobile_phones_useful_for_activists_and_NGOs.3F) (accessed March 31, 2007).

cultural issues unique to your constituency that may prevent sharing of numbers, forwarding messages, or even using phones in the way you conceive.

The cost of hardware and services can make mobile phones out of reach, though this is rapidly changing, especially in parts of Africa and Southeast Asia where the growth of cell phones is greatest. There are also significant security concerns for some activists and human rights workers in areas where SIM (Subscriber Identity Module) cards and accounts are registered and monitored by local authorities.<sup>17</sup>

According to Katrin Verclas of MobileActive, nonprofit organizations are rapidly discovering mobile phones and text messaging as a promising way to engage their constituents. But at the same time, there is very little information as to what works and what does not in mobile marketing and messaging.<sup>18</sup> She argues that the medium is young, risky when poorly done, and that it will take time to judge payoffs.<sup>19</sup>

### **The Centrality of Human Connections**

There is a school of thought among other activists who think that, although they recognize the potential of social media and cell phones to revitalize political activity, focusing on technology should not be an end unto itself. In an interview with MobileVoter.org, activist Justin Oberman argues:

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<sup>17</sup> *MobileActive*, [http://www.mobileactive.org/wiki/index.php?title=MobileActive\\_Stagey\\_Guide\\_to\\_Using\\_Mobile\\_Phones\\_in\\_Civic\\_Campaigns#What\\_are\\_the\\_Challenges\\_of\\_Using\\_Mobiles\\_in\\_Civic\\_Action\\_Campaigns.3F](http://www.mobileactive.org/wiki/index.php?title=MobileActive_Stagey_Guide_to_Using_Mobile_Phones_in_Civic_Campaigns#What_are_the_Challenges_of_Using_Mobiles_in_Civic_Action_Campaigns.3F) (accessed March 31, 2007).

<sup>18</sup> Katrin Verclas, "Your Questions About Mobile Activism," May 30, 2006, NTEN e-mail discussion board entry, <http://groups.nten.org/message.htm?hid=515&mode=view&igid=63> (accessed April 1, 2007).

<sup>19</sup> Verclas, "Your Questions About Mobile Activism."

No one in the Philippines, for example, signed up to receive text message alerts should a need for social or political protesting arise. The SMS that led to the People Power II demonstration was spread by no other means than the insanely viral communication of peer-to-peer/friend-to-friend networks.... The political momentum against then president Joseph Estrada was already in place.... Text messaging and the mobile medium is not a persuasion tool. Rather, it enables already established means of communication to evolve in new and wonderful ways.<sup>20</sup>

He is acknowledging, therefore, that the social practices, communications and relationships among people are still paramount in political and social mobilization. *The use of cell phones, by themselves, will not result in an eruption of political activity.* The conditions for political activity would actually have to exist in the first place. The cell phone primarily acts as a device to facilitate the expression of those sentiments in explicitly political ways.

Media critic Douglas Rushkoff, argues that text messaging campaigns based on temporary affiliations (such as signing up for SMS alerts or joining a flash mob based on a text message received) are essentially fleeting in nature:

[Political efforts coordinated via SMS messaging] are not true, bottom up, spontaneous, grass-roots expressions of networked solidarity, nor even representations of groups willing to follow up on their stated convictions; they are simply instances of large numbers of people momentarily willing to take their orders from above.<sup>21</sup>

Rushkoff is underlining Oberman's point about the centrality of social relationships, communications, and the proper conditions for political activity to occur in political and social mobilizations. Technological tools like social media and cell phones,

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<sup>20</sup> Bart Cheever, "Bart Cheever Talks with Justin Oberman," October 28, 2005, *Mobilevoter.org*, <http://www.mobilevoter.org/blog/archives/2005/10/justin.html#more> (accessed March 20, 2007).

<sup>21</sup> Douglas Rushkoff, "SMS Activism: Don't Call Us, We'll Call You," June 8, 2005, <http://www.rushkoff.com/TheFeatureArchive/SMSactivism.html> (accessed April 3, 2007).

by themselves, are not a magic bullet to spontaneously spur political mobilization happen. They simply facilitate the expression of pre-existing conditions, sentiments and relationships in explicitly political ways.

In Oberman and Rushkoff's perspective, therefore, conditions for activists and organizations to mobilize their constituencies are not wholly transformed by the introduction of cell phones and social media tools. The right political, social, economic and cultural conditions must still exist for political mobilization to happen. No amount of social media and cell phone SMS campaigns can replace the power of peer-to-peer relationships and the right social conditions to drive a message or an agenda.

### **Analogy of a Forest Fire**

The NetLogo Fire demo, <http://ccl.northwestern.edu/netlogo/models/Fire>,<sup>22</sup> is a computer-based theoretical model applied to cell phones and activism in a blog about network-centric advocacy, [http://www.network-centricadvocacy.net/2006/11/connection\\_matt.html](http://www.network-centricadvocacy.net/2006/11/connection_matt.html).<sup>23</sup> The model is a simulation of the spread of a fire through a forest. One is given the option of starting a fire on the left side of the screen and controlling one variable—the density of the trees in the forest (the exercise assumes there is no wind). What one discovers is that there is a threshold that must be crossed in terms of forest density before the fire can spread through the forest.

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<sup>22</sup> U. Wilensky, NetLogo Fire model, 1998, Center for Connected Learning and Computer-Based Modeling, Northwestern University, <http://ccl.northwestern.edu/netlogo/models/Fire> (accessed April 6, 2007).

<sup>23</sup> *Network-Centric Advocacy*, "Connection Matters: Spreading a Message vs. Spreading a Frame," November 13, 2006, [http://www.network-centricadvocacy.net/2006/11/connection\\_matt.html](http://www.network-centricadvocacy.net/2006/11/connection_matt.html) (accessed April 9, 2007).

Set the density below that threshold and the flame will die out before it reaches the other side.

The implication of the model for activism, therefore, is that for a message or an action to spread throughout a population, there must be the right density of interconnected people ready and willing to accept that message or to take action. Initiate the spread of your message below a certain threshold and your message will die out. Initiate the spread of the same message to a population that is densely connected with one another and you have the potential to start a conflagration. In terms of studying social movements, focusing one's analysis on the message, message delivery, the carrier, and tools/methods by which the message is delivered (the match to start a fire) is only one side of the equation. One's analysis must also include an understanding of the recipients of that message and their connectedness to one another (the density of the forest). The implication, thus, is that in assessing the effectiveness of social media and technology in social settings, one must not limit analysis to the technology side of the equation. One must include in the mix the social side of the equation—exactly the point made Oberman and Rushkoff.

The use of social media in activism has become common practice worldwide. Activists in the civil society sector recognize the potential of these technologies for civic engagement and to connect with one another, but actual adoption of these technologies vary. Academic scholarship has yet to fully explore the extent and implications of these developments.

Although much attention has been paid on the Internet as a tool for activism, scant attention has been given to technologies such as cell phones and their potential. A great

deal of material based on the experiences of practitioners exists online about cell phones and civic engagement. Organizations such as MobileActive have taken the initiative to compile best practices, case studies, and the latest information and make them available in a centralized location on the MobileActive web site, <http://mobileactive.org/>.

Moreover, the important step toward organizing cell phone activists into a global network of practitioners has been taken with the formation of MobileActive.

Evaluation techniques and metrics to establish the efficacy of mobile campaigns, however, have not yet been universally put in practice and studied, making assumptions on the effectiveness of mobile campaigns tentative and inconclusive. Some critical voices, moreover, caution that too much focus on technology and its potential obscures the difficulties and challenges that efforts in engaging constituencies for mass mobilization and political activism face—with or without the use of social media like cell phones. These activists argue that cell phones primarily act as conduits for peer-to-peer networks in making it possible for mobilizations like the Philippine People Power II revolution to happen. The right social and political conditions will still have to be in place. Cell phones will not work like magic, whose adoption will result in mass mobilization.

## Chapter III

### CASE STUDY

This chapter examines the work of Fahamu, an organization based in Africa and the United Kingdom, which has attracted international attention in recent years because of its innovative use of emerging technologies as tools to advance social justice issues. It was particularly noted in the international press for its campaigns which utilized cell phones and SMS technology.

Fahamu is an African non-government organization (NGO) established in 1997 by Kenyan social activist and current Executive Director, Firoze Manji. It has offices in Oxford in the U.K., South Africa and Kenya. Fahamu is a Kiswahili word which means “understanding.” The organization is a pioneer in using emerging technologies in support of human rights and social justice.<sup>24</sup>

Fahamu’s work covers four broad areas: (1) innovative use of information and communication technologies; (2) stimulating debate, discussion and analysis; (3) distributing news and information; (4) developing training materials and running distance-learning courses. Fahamu focuses primarily on Africa, although it collaborates with other organizations such as Oxfam, the Office of the United Nations High

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<sup>24</sup> Fahamu web site, <http://www.fahamu.org/aboutus.php> (accessed March 30, 2007).



Commissioner for Human Rights, and the Ford Foundation, among others, to support the global movement for human rights and social justice.<sup>25</sup>

Fahamu has received a number of awards for its use of technology in activism. Fahamu was one of five Tech Laureates in the 2005 Microsoft Education Award category. Its online newsletter, *Pambazuka News*, won the Highway Africa 2005 award for the innovative use of new media. The organization also won the AOL Innovations in the Community Award 2004 for innovations in the use of SMS for advocacy work. Fahamu South Africa was one of ten winners of the Gender and Agriculture in the Information Society (GenARDIS) 2005 Award. Fahamu was runner-up for the Stockholm Challenge 2004 award for the development of distance learning courses for human rights organizations. And finally, in the PoliticsOnline and 6th Worldwide Forum on Electronic Democracy, *Pambazuka News* was recognized as one of the top ten individuals, organizations and companies who are changing the world of the Internet and politics<sup>26</sup>.

Fahamu's most prominent projects which involve technology are: *Pambazuka News*, its distance learning program, the program for U.K. diaspora organizations, and SMS campaigns.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid

<sup>26</sup> Fahamu, "Fahamu: Networks for Social Justice," *Annual Report 2004/2005*, p.2.

## ***Pambazuka News***

*Pambazuka News* is a weekly e-mail newsletter that was launched in 2000 as a platform for discussion and dissemination of information about social justice and human rights in Africa. The newsletter carries editorials, opinion pieces, analyses, as well as summaries of web sites and mailing lists. It covers a wide variety of subjects ranging from development, human rights, conflict, refugees, gender and culture in Africa. Most of the writings come from within Africa with over 100 authors contributing content in 2005. By the beginning of 2005, the newsletter had a subscriber base of more than 18,000 and an estimated readership of over 100,000 every week. *Pambazuka News* won the 2005 Highway Africa award for the innovative use of new media.<sup>27</sup>

## **Distance Learning Program**

Fahamu has developed a range of distance-learning courses aimed at strengthening the capacity of human rights and civil society organizations. Based on extensive research conducted on the training needs of such organizations, the courses are a combination of CD-ROM and a tutor who facilitates the course through e-mail. Once assignments are completed, students attend a face-to-face workshop and in the final phase undertake a project. Current courses include Introduction to Human Rights, Advocacy and Campaigning, Using the Internet for Advocacy and Research, Fundraising and Resource Mobilization, among others. In 2005, Fahamu provided training to 297

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<sup>27</sup> Fahamu, 5.

organizations. Participant institutions included human rights commissions and organizations, churches, women's organizations, United Nations agencies, development organizations, youth organizations, and private sector organizations from 51 countries.<sup>28</sup>

### **Programs for U.K. African Diaspora Organizations**

Fahamu, in collaboration with the African Foundation for Development (AFFORD) and African Diaspora Voices for Africa's Development (ADVAD), launched a program to strengthen the capacity of U.K.-based African organizations. Fahamu developed several online databases which include resources such as a bibliography of research on civil society and health on behalf of the World Health Organization and the Zimbabwean Training and Research Support Center. Fahamu also developed the Zimciv Web site which contained information developed for and about civil society in Zimbabwe to strengthen the dissemination, analysis and debate on issues concerning civil society. Fahamu also created a publications database and bibliography on equity in health for EQUINET, the Network for Equity in Health in Southern Africa. Fahamu also helped EQUINET develop and manage their web site and their monthly electronic newsletter.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid,11.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid,15.

## Fahamu and Mobile Phones

Recognized as being at the forefront of e-advocacy not only in Africa but in the global context,<sup>30</sup> Fahamu's SMS campaigns have attracted wide attention among technology advocates and activists who advocate using emerging technologies in social justice work.

In 2004, Fahamu joined Solidarity with African Women's Rights (SOAWR), an NGO coalition composed of 21 women's and human rights organizations, to promote the ratification of the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa. The Protocol is international legislation which guarantees African women's rights. Fahamu offered *Pambazuka News* and technological support to the coalition to raise public awareness about the Protocol. It created a Web site and developed procedures for people to register their support for the Protocol using mobile text messaging (SMS) technology. An SMS alert service was also established which enabled users to sign up for free SMS alerts about the progress of the campaign. The goal of ratification by 15 countries in the African Union was achieved, enabling the Protocol to be ratified on November 2005.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> *DemoBlog*, "Gates Project 12: Fahamu at the Forefront," October 26, 2006, <http://internationaldemoblog.blogspot.com/2006/10/gates-project-12-fahamu-at-forefront.html> (March 20, 2007).

<sup>31</sup> Fahamu, *Annual Report 2004/2005*, p.7.

## The Protocol Campaign

The Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa was the group's very first SMS campaign and, as far as the organizers knew, was the first time SMS technologies have been used on such a way.<sup>32</sup>

The campaign worked like this: Fahamu set up a phone number in South Africa to receive text messages. Those signing the petition text messaged the word "petition" along with the caller's name and telephone number to the designated phone number in South Africa. The SIM card, which is attached to a computer, converts the message to an email and places it to a send box. A script was written to frequently check the send box. The contents eventually get delivered to a database and stored. Once in the database, the information can then be presented in any method Fahamu chooses. A list of the signatures was online on the Fahamu Web site throughout the campaign and was also presented to the African Union.<sup>33</sup>

The campaign was first publicized in the *Pambazuka News* newsletter. International ties with feminist and human rights organizations were utilized as the campaign was promoted internationally in conferences and meetings with like-minded social justice organizations. The final push was provided by international mainstream media as articles published in the BBC spiked the number of petitions upward in the latter end of the campaign. The result was that within one year of the campaign being started, the required number of countries ratifying the Protocol was reached.

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<sup>32</sup> Justin Oberman, "SMS, Social Justice Style, in Africa," October 10, 2005, *Personal Democracy Forum*, <http://www.personaldemocracy.com/node/738> (accessed March 20, 2007).

<sup>33</sup> Justin Oberman, "SMS, Social Justice Style, in Africa," October 10, 2005, *Personal Democracy Forum*, <http://www.personaldemocracy.com/node/738> (accessed March 20, 2007).

The campaign collected 4,000 signatures—about 500 of them from SMS text messages—from 29 African countries. Despite the relatively low number of petitioners, the campaign was widely considered a success. Before the campaign, only one country had ratified the Protocol. After the campaign was launched, within one year, the goal of the required 15 countries ratifying the Protocol was reached.<sup>34</sup>

Fahamu Executive Director Firoze Manji likened their initial foray into mobile phone activism to a blind person tapping around with a white stick.

We didn't have a clue what would happen, or what the reception would be.... It was just such a crazy idea, and even if it didn't work, out of failures—you learn. Some of the best stuff we've done has come out of stuff that's gone badly.... We thought we'd done something run-of-the-mill, that everyone here at MobileActive would have done something like this long ago.... But it turned out it's something no one else has ever done. This is new technology, it's growing all the time—so the potential is growing all the time.<sup>35</sup>

### **Global Call to Action against Poverty Campaign**

Fahamu launched a second SMS campaign in 2005 in support of the Global Call to Action against Poverty (<http://www.whiteband.org/>), an international confederation of organizations calling for cancellation of African debt to the developed nations of the Global North. The GCAPSMS campaign was the African component of the international Make Poverty History campaign which was started in 2005 in the U.K. The Make Poverty History campaign was an international coalition of charities, religious groups,

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<sup>34</sup> Fahamu, *Annual Report 2004/2005*, p.9.

<sup>35</sup> Emily Gertz, "Fahamu: Pan-African Text Messaging for Social Justice," October 31, 2005, *World Changing*, <http://www.worldchanging.com/archives/003694.html> (accessed March 20, 2007).

trade unions, campaigning groups and celebrities who mobilized to increase awareness and pressure governments into taking action towards eradicating poverty. The symbol of the campaign was a white bracelet. Television ads in Europe, the United States, and in other countries ran for many months, urging people to speak to their representatives about the issue of poverty and debt by countries in the Global South to institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.<sup>36</sup>

For this campaign, Fahamu enhanced the SMS technology to be able to send longer text messages and for every SMS message to be displayed in a section of the GCAPSMS Web site. Concerts and musical events were held and broadcast on television throughout Africa, urging people to send SMS messages to the campaign and for people to wear a white wristband in solidarity with the global effort to call attention to poverty in Africa. The GCAPSMS campaign asked people to text “No to Debt” along with a plea to end poverty in their own words.

The GCAPSMS Web site highlighted Fahamu's technological strengths, including content from *Pambazuka News*, regularly updated SMS messages from all over the world, as well as an RSS feed of these messages.<sup>37</sup> The campaign also was coordinated with music festivals and televised concerts featuring Africa's most prominent musicians. These concerts were held to coincide with important meetings of world bodies such as the United Nations and the World Trade Organization. During the concerts, viewers were called upon to send text messages to a number which then displayed the messages on the

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<sup>36</sup> Wikipedia, “Make Poverty History,” <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whiteband> (accessed April 4, 2007).

<sup>37</sup> Gertz, Pan-African Text Messaging.

GCAPSMS Web site.<sup>38</sup> More than 2,000 SMS messages were received on the GCAPSMS Web site since the project launched in 2005.<sup>39</sup>

Fahamu's latest SMS campaign was launched in December 2006. The UmNyango Project will use SMS technology for rural women and men to access information and report incidences of violence against women and children, as well as violations of women's constitutional rights to the land.<sup>40</sup> Another component of the project will enable local women to produce their own radio shows which will be made available to local radio stations as well as distributed on the Internet as Podcasts. The initiative will be tested out in KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa, and if successful will be rolled out on a wider scale. Funded by the Dutch organization, Humanist Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries (HIVOS), Fahamu is hopeful that there will be sufficient interest among donor agencies, government and the private sector to enable the project to continue beyond May 2007.<sup>41</sup>

Fahamu's use of technology, therefore, is multi-faceted. Not only is the organization a pioneer in the use of the Internet and e-mail newsletters on the African continent, the organization is also internationally recognized as a leader and pioneer in the use of cell phone and SMS technologies in public relations and advocacy campaigns.

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<sup>38</sup> *Pambazuka News*, "Africa: 40 Million Set to Watch GCAP Standing Tall Against Poverty Concert Across Africa," October 13, 2005, <http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/gcap/29828> (accessed April 11, 2007).

<sup>39</sup> GCAPSMS: Thumbs Down 2 Poverty, <http://www.gcapsms.org/> (accessed March 30, 2007).

<sup>40</sup> *Clickatell News*, "Rural Women to Report Human Rights Violations Against them Using Mobile Phones," December 6, 2006, [http://www.clickatell.com/brochure/press/press\\_20061206\\_rural.php](http://www.clickatell.com/brochure/press/press_20061206_rural.php) (accessed March 20, 2007).

<sup>41</sup> *Pambazuka News*, "Africa: The UmNyango Project," December 7, 2006, <http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/advocacy/38739> (accessed April 1, 2007).



Driven primarily by its mission for social justice and human rights, Fahamu stands as an example of an organization which effectively uses technology in a civil society context.

## **Chapter IV**

### **CASE STUDY ANALYSIS OF FAHAMU**

This chapter provides an analysis of Fahamu's use of social media—in this case, cell phones and SMS—as an example of how communications has changed for activist organizations. Fahamu's SMS campaigns were entirely new ways to mobilize, organize, and communicate between an organization and its constituency. Fahamu stands as an example of an activist group which made effective use of social media technologies to accomplish their goals. In addition, this chapter will also discuss how one can extend the conclusions about Fahamu's campaigns to other activist organizations and their work towards social change, and how one can determine and gauge the effectiveness of social media in an organization's efforts.

Social media technologies are known to have utterly transformed communications. These technologies have allowed for new ways of quickly organizing, mobilizing, and communicating for people and organizations that were not feasible before the spread of these technologies. My central research question is: can the use of social media technology make activist groups more effective in reaching their objectives?

## **Fahamu's SMS Campaigns**

Fahamu is best known for three SMS campaigns: (1) the campaign to ratify the Protocol for the Rights of Women in Africa (May 2004-November 2005) coordinated with SOAWR; (2) the Thumbs Down to Poverty/GCAPSMS campaign (June to December 2005) conducted in conjunction with the worldwide Make Poverty History campaign; (3) the UmNyango project (December 2006-May 2007). My analysis will focus on two of these campaigns: the Protocol and Thumbs Down to Poverty campaigns because there are no data or information available on the results or evaluation of the UmNyango project.

## **Mobile Strategy**

The choice of mobile phones for SMS campaigns was a strategic choice for Fahamu. According to journalist Emily Gertz, Fahamu staff landed upon the idea of taking advantage of the huge growth of mobile phones in Africa. There were approximately 52 million mobile phone subscribers in Africa as of January 2004 with a projected 67 million by the end of 2005. The campaign provided the opportunity to test whether this population of “texters” could be mobilized for a social justice campaign.<sup>42</sup> The report, “Prospects for e-Advocacy in the Global South,” supports these figures that indicate a skyrocketing growth of mobile phone penetration in Africa. It argues while

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<sup>42</sup> Gertz, “Fahamu: Gertz, Pan-African Text Messaging for Social Justice,” *World Changing*.

poorer nations continue to have lower penetration rates than richer ones, poorer nations also exhibit vastly higher growth rates. For example, while the U.K.'s mobile phone use grew 23% between 2002 and 2004, Nigeria grew by 537%.<sup>43</sup>

According to Fahamu's Executive Director Manji:

We decided to use SMS as a way of enabling people to sign an online petition. This technology has not previously been used before (to our knowledge, and certainly not in Africa)... We had no expectations that we would have got thousands or even millions of SMS messages (and that would have bankrupted us if we had!). No the point was that we wanted to get public attention as part of our overall campaign to get the Protocol ratified by the necessary 15 countries so that it would come into force.<sup>44</sup>

More than a petition or a tool to collect signatures, Fahamu realized the value of enacting the campaign as a way to gain publicity for their cause. They had no illusions or expectations of receiving thousands or millions of signatures in the petition drive, but were cognizant that using the technology in such a manner had the potential to bring attention to their cause.

For the GCAPSMS campaign, Fahamu amplified this strategic use of technology. They augmented the SMS technology to allow for longer text messages and the text messages they received were published on a Web site created for that purpose <http://www.gcapsms.org/>.<sup>45</sup> The Web site and the number to send an SMS text message to were publicized and cross-marketed in conjunction with large-scale music festivals and

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<sup>43</sup> Mary Joyce and Ricken Patel, "Prospects for e-Advocacy in the Global South: A Report for the Gates Foundation" Version 1.0, Res Publica, January 2007, page 18.

<sup>44</sup> Firoze Manji, e-mail message to author, April 14, 2007, Appendix A.

<sup>45</sup> Gertz, "Fahamu: Pan-African Text Messaging for Social Justice."

concerts that featured prominent African artists and musicians.<sup>46</sup> Again, this experiment resulted in widespread media attention and international recognition for their innovative use of technology—and by extension, to the cause for which they were using the technology.

Basic resources that Fahamu used to implement the campaigns were a part-time programmer and part time information officer over an 18-month period. Their basic equipment was cell phone SIM card attached to a computer. In terms of special skills or technology, special code was written to transfer information from the SIM card to a database. All of this was implemented at a cost of approximately \$10,000. This outline gives an idea of the scope of Fahamu as an organization—that is, one of modest resources and size.

Fahamu’s goal for these campaigns was to mobilize the African population to sign their petition. This had never been done before inside or outside Africa and certainly not at the scope that Fahamu attempted. Their main focus was to use the publicity that they received as a result of the campaigns to amplify and to gain attention to their cause. Was Fahamu successful in this use of mobile phones? If so, how was success defined? How was it measured?

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<sup>46</sup>*Pambazuka News*, “Africa: 40 Million Set to Watch GCAP Standing Tall against Poverty Concert Across Africa,” October 13, 2005, <http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/gcap/29828> (accessed April 11, 2007).

## Campaign Results vs. Objectives

The numerical results of Fahamu's petition campaigns were 4,000 signed the petition for the Protocol with about 500 coming from text messages. About 2,000 signatures were gathered for the GCAPSMS. Despite these numbers, Fahamu considers both campaigns to be successful. In the case of the Protocol campaign, within one year of enacting the campaign, the required 15 nations ratified the legislation for the Protocol to come into force. This was the main intention and the primary measure of success for the campaign. For the GCAPSMS campaign, the publicity that Fahamu received as a result of the campaign widely publicized the Make Poverty History movement; Moreover, they were able to gain considerable attention in the media and among technology and activist circles for their cause.

Examples of the international attention they received came from MobileActive, where the two campaigns were featured in the *Strategy Guide for Using Mobile Phones in Advocacy Campaigns*,<sup>47</sup> DemoBlog,<sup>48</sup> BBC News,<sup>49</sup> WorldChanging,<sup>50</sup> Personal Democracy Forum,<sup>51</sup> Tactical Technology Collective,<sup>52</sup> among others. According to

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<sup>47</sup> Michael Stein and Katrin Verclas, *MobileActive.org Strategy Guide #2: Using Mobile Phones in Advocacy Campaigns*, Strategy Guide Series, MobileActive.org, 2007, <http://www.mobileactive.org/guides> (accessed March 25, 2007).

<sup>48</sup> *DemoBlog*, "Gates Project 12: Fahamu at the Forefront," October 26, 2006, <http://internationaldemoblog.blogspot.com/2006/10/gates-project-12-fahamu-at-forefront.html> (March 20, 2007).

<sup>49</sup> *BBC News*, "Text Petition for African Women," July 30, 2004, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3937715.stm> (accessed March 20, 2007).

<sup>50</sup> Gertz, "Fahamu: Pan-African Text Messaging for Social Justice."

<sup>51</sup> Justin Oberman, "SMS, Social Justice Style, in Africa," October 10, 2005, *Personal Democracy Forum*, <<http://www.personaldemocracy.com/node/738>> (accessed March 20, 2007).

<sup>52</sup> Frederick Noronha, "From Information to Campaigning, An African Network Shows the Way," November 2, 2006, *Tactical Technology Collective*, <http://www.tacticaltech.org/node/323> (accessed March 20, 2007).

Firoze Manji, these, more than the act of collecting signatures, were the main objectives for conducting both campaigns.

One could make the argument, however, that if one were to judge Fahamu's SMS campaigns solely on numerical criteria that their efforts were not very successful.

Accumulating less than 5,000 signatures for each petition campaign from a population base of tens of millions of potential petition signers is not a very good showing. Arguing so, one could say that Fahamu's efforts at using social media had failed.

It can be argued that Fahamu could well have attained better numerical results had its campaign been conducted differently. They could have used better messaging to appeal to a wider base of people. They could have taken advantage of better ways to deliver their message to let more people know about the campaign. The campaigns, with bigger budgets, could have been marketed to a larger segment of the African population. The delivery methods used and target audiences for the campaign may have been too narrow.

Fahamu's Executive Director, Firoze Manji, provides some insight into Fahamu's thinking in assessing the results of the campaigns:

So, the tool that we used was SMS/petition. But the 'metric' we used to measure the success of our campaign was—from the start—to have the necessary 15 countries ratify the Protocol and for the Protocol to come into force. That was the outcome we were looking for. We were looking to build up a movement. The absolute number of SMS messages we received was relatively small (some 500 only, although quite a number of those represented messages from organisations with hundreds, and in some

cases, thousands, of members). But the publicity we got—especially when famous people like Graca Machel signed, was considerable. We had lots of interviews in the mainstream press, and each such interview provided us with an opportunity to promote the cause (not the technology!).<sup>53</sup>

This is a good point to make a distinction between measuring the effectiveness of a particular cell phone campaign and measuring the results from utilizing cell phones as a tool for social change. One can set up an SMS campaign to gather important data while the campaign is being implemented. One can track the number of opt-in rates, the number of people who responded to the campaign's SMS message, the number of times the SMS was forwarded, the number of downloads of ring tones from the campaign Web site, among other indicators. These can all be considered important metrics that are measurable indicators of how successful a campaign was in attracting and mobilizing people to some sort of action.

Fahamu's measures were the petition signatures. The number of petitions they gathered, although small in quantitative terms, had big consequences. For the Protocol campaign, the 4,000 signatures they gathered, coupled with the public relations push that gave high visibility to the effort, proved sufficient in spurring the required 15 nations to ratify the Protocol legislation. The Protocol campaign, therefore, was successful in attaining its stated goal as well as giving Fahamu the experience of launching such a campaign.

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<sup>53</sup> Firoze Manji, email to author.



The GCAPSMS campaign is less clear on whether or not it succeeded in its stated goal to address poverty. One would have to see these efforts as tied to the larger Make Poverty History movement. But if one were to keep in mind that the stated goal of Fahamu was not collecting as many signatures as possible but to attract attention to an important cause, then one can contend that the attention the GCAPSMS campaign received was its own measure of success for the larger cause.

One could make the argument, however, that Fahamu's activism was not utterly changed by the introduction of social media technology of cell phones and SMS. Theirs was not a technological revolution in activist methods because they still relied on the traditional activist method of gaining publicity for their cause as their primary method and objective in undertaking the campaigns.

To restate Fahamu's insight—the point of SMS technology and social media is not that its use had utterly changed the very nature of activism. The point is that for Fahamu, there are now new methods, strategies, and tools that an organization can choose to deploy to advance its cause. An SMS campaign using cell phones is one such method. It can be combined with traditional activist methods, such as publicity, as Fahamu did. The end result is the same—did the organization accomplish what it set out to do? FAHAMU succeeded in accomplishing what it set out to do.

A third criticism one can give is that Fahamu's SMS campaigns were not particularly effective ways of mobilizing, organizing, or communicating as this paper

originally asserted. Judging from the quantitative results of gathering signatures, the population of African texters were not mobilized in great numbers to join their cause.

But it is clear that Fahamu's SMS campaigns were experimental. Fahamu's use of technology was innovative for its time. No other organization had ever attempted to do what they set out to do with the methods they used. The fact that Fahamu initiated these campaigns and received worldwide attention for their effort builds a foundation for future campaigns using SMS and cell phone technology.

What is notable about Fahamu's success is the impact generated from a modest investment of \$10,000, basic communications equipment and a staff of two part-time workers. Fahamu's campaigns provide lessons in networking, public relations and marketing as much as the innovative use of technology. In addition, Fahamu demonstrated how the creative and strategic use of technology can allow a small organization with limited means to accomplish great things. Its role in the ratification of international law for women's rights through the Protocol campaign, for example, is a significant feat for any organization. Fahamu's modest resources were skillfully invested in accomplishing a strategic objective while testing new possibilities of a technological tool. The accomplishments of Fahamu with the resources they had were astounding and a testament to their resourcefulness and organizational sophistication. Ultimately, Fahamu had what were essential to energize even a small organization from the Global South: a tremendous networking capability, a track record of imaginative use of communications

technology, and an understanding of its constituencies, sufficiently to mount and sustain a transnational campaign in pursuit of its cause.

### **SMS Campaigns after Fahamu**

Technology and techniques for cell phone SMS campaigns have evolved by leaps and bounds since Fahamu's initial, experimental forays into the medium in 2004. SMS campaigns have been growing in sophistication following in the footsteps of commercial SMS marketing campaigns. Large NGOs with substantial budgets such as Amnesty International, Oxfam, International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) and Greenpeace have undertaken SMS campaigns since Fahamu.

IFAW's 2006 campaign to create a popular groundswell against the Canadian practice of seal-hunting garnered 50,000 mobile petition signatures. Oxfam mobilized over 100,000 protesters in June 2005 for the G8 Summit in Edinburgh, Scotland in a campaign that made extensive use of mobile phone messaging.<sup>54</sup> Amnesty International USA combined traditional advertising with an SMS campaign in a 2007 petition campaign urging Congress to close the U.S. Guantanamo Bay detention center. They published a full-page ad in the *New York Times* which urged readers to text in their support.<sup>55</sup> The 2005 Zero Waste campaign by Greenpeace Argentina asked people to

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<sup>54</sup> Stein and Verclas, *MobileActive.org Strategy Guide #2: Using Mobile Phones in Advocacy Campaigns*, Strategy Guide Series, MobileActive.org, 2007, <http://www.mobileactive.org/guides> (accessed March 25, 2007).

<sup>55</sup> *Textually.org*, "Amnesty International Launches SMS Petition to Close Guantanamo Bay," January 12, 2007, <http://www.textually.org/textually/archives/2007/01/014667.htm> (accessed April 28, 2007).

send an SMS to support formation of a group of “mobile-activistas” to promote their campaign. The mobile-activists sent text messages to legislatures and key players involved in the various hearings. SMS was also used to arrange spontaneous meeting points and demonstrations. The result: the government of Buenos Aires will implement a Zero Waste policy that will, by 2010, reduce urban waste sent to landfills by 50%, 75% by 2015 and 100% by 2020.<sup>56</sup> While Fahamu can be considered an early adopter, these large organizations can now be considered the leaders.

SMS campaigns such as the ones cited above have been conducted with bigger budgets than Fahamu’s campaigns. They can be considered more sophisticated in targeting and segmenting audiences, crafting messages to appeal to different audience segments, delivery of messages, collecting data to measure different indicators of audience engagement, establishing metrics to determine effectiveness of campaigns, and crafting cross-promotion strategies for keeping people engaged in campaigns. Finally, technology to implement SMS campaigns are now increasingly outsourced to companies which specialize in such campaigns.<sup>57</sup> Companies now exist which handle the implementation, evaluation and technical aspects of SMS campaigning and which cater to the NGO market. The dynamics of SMS campaigning, therefore, have changed in recent years since Fahamu laid the groundwork for political SMS campaigning in 2004.

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<sup>56</sup> Mobileactive.org, “Congratulations Greenpeace Argentina!” Blog, December 10, 2005, <http://216.92.83.141/node/52> (accessed April 28, 2007).

<sup>57</sup> Examples of mobile campaign provider companies that service North American organizations are Mobile Accord (<http://www.mobileaccord.com/>) and Rights Group (<http://www.rights-group.com/>).

More recent SMS campaigns by NGOs have been able to demonstrate numbers and quantifiable results in the tens of thousands in terms of petition signatures, opt-ins to their networks, downloads of ringtones and wallpapers, among others. The techniques of commercial campaigns have filtered into the NGO sector and, many would argue, to great effect. With increasing sophistication, however, come greater expectations for these new techniques and technologies to bring about the fundamental reason why activists conduct SMS campaigns in the first place: effecting social change.

Evaluating if current SMS campaigns are fulfilling the promise of social media as tools for organizing, mobilizing, and communicating is still a big challenge for activists. Measuring these developments would have to begin by inquiring if these campaigns are engaging people—their audiences— in meaningful ways and if this correlates to taking action, again, in meaningful ways and in sufficient numbers. Ultimately, the goal is to see collective action resulting in positive social change.

These challenges point to directions for future research on the implications of what has been learned from the innovations by Fahamu in using social media on other organizations which choose to use these technologies.

A survey of organizations which use social media technologies would be useful. Some questions to ask could be: are those organizations accomplishing their goals? Are they able to enact campaigns that were impossible or even unrealistic before the introduction of social media technologies? Are they able to reach people or exchange information in ways not thought possible without these tools? A comparable survey can

also be conducted among organizations which do not use social media technologies.

Future research will always go back to the basic questions for any social movement or social change organization—how does one know if one’s efforts have been successful? Is there a general framework that can be drawn up out of Fahamu’s experiments and later applications of mobile phone technology to determine and gauge effectiveness?

It seems the best way to measure success—and by extension, the effectiveness of social media tools—is to check accomplishments against stated goals. This simple rule of thumb should compel disciplined, strategic thinking and imaginative use of limited resources. Whether it is to ratify a piece of legislation to international law, or to call attention to poverty, one must always keep these end results in mind in evaluating the effectiveness of technology. Finally, there must be caution against focusing too much on the use of technology as a magic formula. According to Firoze Manji of Fahamu: it is easy to be romantic about the tools, its potential, and capabilities. The point is to be strategic, and recognize that tools only complement, not substitute for, human interaction.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Firoze Manji, e-mail to author.

## **Chapter V**

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

This study examined the role of mobile phones and SMS technology in the work of Fahamu, an African activist organization working for human rights and social justice. Fahamu is widely regarded as an innovator and trailblazer in the use of media technologies in social justice work. This study set out to find evidence that social media technologies have profoundly transformed public communication, allowing for new ways of quickly organizing, mobilizing, and communicating among people and organizations that were not feasible before the popularization of these technologies. Specifically, the study examined the role of SMS and cell phones in the successful campaigns by Fahamu to ratify international law and to gain attention to efforts to eradicate world poverty.

The purpose of this study was to illustrate, through the real-life example of Fahamu, how social media can be used as tools for social activism. Examining Fahamu's experience and the role social media plays in its operations supported this student's optimism about the potential transformative powers of social media technologies for an activist organization.

The literature review focused on published material which illustrated the potential of social media for organizing, mobilizing, communications, exchange of information,

and access to information. The case profile and analysis provided insights into how SMS technology and cell phones have been used in two successful real-life campaigns by an activist organization. The example of Fahamu as a successful adopter of these technologies provided insight how these technologies can be used, particularly in strategic ways, beyond the typical functions of the technology. More than a method to collect SMS signatures in a petition, Fahamu strategically used SMS campaigning, itself, as a publicity-seeking method to gain attention to their cause.

This study is significant because very little scholarship has been done so far on the potential of and the role social media technologies—particularly mobile communications—can take in political and social activism. There is a niche in scholarship, therefore, that stands to be filled. My study is an attempt to gain a foothold in that niche and to lay the foundations for future research and exploration in the role of social media technologies in activism for social change.

Fahamu found an innovative way of using cell phones for activist campaigns that had never been done before both in technique (gathering signatures for a petition) and scope (the entire continent of Africa). For these campaigns, Fahamu had two ambitious goals: to mobilize public pressure for successful continent-wide ratification of the Protocol on African women's rights and to gain attention for the issue of world poverty.

While the results of the two campaigns were small in the context of the population, they did accomplish the goals that Fahamu set out to reach for each campaign. Social media made it possible for Fahamu to tackle these projects and contributed to their success. Without cell phones or SMS messaging in combination with other media such as the Internet, they would not have accomplished as much as they



have. Two international campaigns to gain publicity and harness public opinion would have required more resources well out of reach for an organization of Fahamu's size and resources using traditional methods of activism.

Fahamu's use of the technology as tools for mobilizing and publicity confirmed Fahamu's reputation for technological innovation on the world stage. In turn, it used the attention it received to reflect attention to its causes. With admirable economy the SMS campaigning was used in creative and unexpected ways.

SMS and cell phone campaigns have come a long way since Fahamu's experimental forays in 2004. Organizations such as Greenpeace and Amnesty International, with much bigger budgets, visibility and name recognition have undertaken SMS campaigns in recent years. The techniques that Fahamu pioneered have been refined and combined with techniques from commercial campaigns. The use of cell phones and SMS campaigning, therefore, has become more sophisticated since Fahamu first conducted their petition campaigns.

The results of more recent campaigns in quantitative terms dwarf the results that Fahamu received for their two campaigns. Responses, opt-ins, downloads, and other indicators and metrics for these recent SMS campaigns number in the tens of thousands—far more than Fahamu's 4,000 for the Protocol campaign and 2,000 for the GCAPSMS campaign. Fahamu's modest results, however, were no hindrance for it to accomplish major goals.

Key research findings in this study are:

- 1) Social practices, communications and relationships among people are still paramount in political and social mobilization. Social media is not a magic bullet

that can make mobilization happen (the point of Oberman, Rushkoff, and Firoze Manji).

- 2) Coupling the capabilities for text messaging with other technologies such as radio, the Internet, video and blogging carries great potential in developing the cell phone as a strategic tool for social and political activism (the point of Mudhai).
- 3) Most civil society organizations have not moved beyond the use of e-mail and Web sites as their primary engagement with emerging technologies. NGOs have not fully embraced the strategic use of these technologies for various reasons and thus, their effectiveness and potential are stunted (the point of Surman and Reilly).

Directions for future research, therefore, should try and extend these observations in looking at applications of mobile phone technology by organizations other than Fahamu. Are other organizations which use social media technologies also seeing a measure of success far beyond their capabilities in the absence of these tools? Are other organizations which use social media using them effectively and in ways that allow them to accomplish the goals they set out to do? Is access to social media allowing them to set goals for themselves that would be unrealistic in the absence of these tools, given their scope and budgets? And how do the track record of organizations which use social media compare with the track record of organizations which do not use these tools? Are social media-using organizations doing a better job overall? Only further research and true, empirical comparisons would yield answers to these questions.

Fahamu illustrated how the adoption and use of social media tools can allow an organization to accomplish much more than is usually possible given the scope and

budget of most nonprofit and activist organizations. In the case of Fahamu, the technology appeared to have had a leveling effect where a small organization like Fahamu can have the potential to accomplish big things. If Fahamu can accomplish what it has with the technology, it is only that much more exciting to speculate about and to explore how much social media activism can accomplish utilized by larger organizations with bigger budgets such as Greenpeace and Amnesty International. Will the adage be true that bigger bucks will make for a bigger effect in the world of activism and social justice work? Or will the bigger effects be more of a function of technical and strategic creativity, ingenuity, and resourcefulness? These questions are exciting directions for further research that future studies can take.

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## **APPENDIX A: E-mail interview with Firoze Manji, Executive Director of Fahamu**

Re: Fahamu Web site feedback  
Firoze Manji <firoze@fahamu.org>  
AddSaturday, April 14, 2007 11:57:45 AM  
To:Redante Asuncion-Reed <redantereed@yahoo.com>

Dear Redante

Sorry for the delay in getting back to you on these questions, but we have been very busy here of late.

**My intention for this study is to lay the groundwork for further academic study of cell phones and social media and to provide a useful context by which to see the effectiveness of these tools in activism.**

**I hope it is OK if I ask you a few questions regarding Fahamu's three SMS campaigns: the Protocol on Women's Rights in Africa, the Global Call to Action against Poverty campaign, and the UmNyango Project. They are copied below.**

**Best regards,  
Redante Asuncion-Reed**

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### **1. What metrics do you use to measure success of your SMS campaigns?**

There is often a serious error made by people about the function of tools and the measurement of outcomes. Let me explain in relation to each of these campaigns:

1. Protocol campaign: We decided to use SMS as a way of enabling people to sign an online petition. This technology has not previously been used before (to our knowledge, and certainly not in Africa), and we realised that there was to some extent some important publicity value in launching this initiative as a way of getting public attention on the Protocol. We had no expectations that we would have got thousands or even millions of SMS messages (and that would have bankrupted us if we had!). No the point was that we wanted to get public attention as part of our overall campaign to get the Protocol ratified by the necessary 15 countries so that it would come into force.

So, the tool that we used was SMS/petition. But the 'metrics' we used to measure the success of our campaign was - from the start - to have the necessary 15 countries ratify the Protocol and for the Protocol to come into force. That was the outcome we were looking for. We were

looking to build up a movement. The absolute number of SMS messages we received was relatively small (some 500 only, although quite a number of those represented messages from organisations with hundreds, and in some cases, thousands, of members). But the publicity we got - especially when famous people like Graca Machel signed, was considerable. We had lots of interviews in the mainstream press, and each such interview provided us with an opportunity to promote the cause (not the technology!).

**2. For the three campaigns above, what indicators did you measure to determine success or failure?**

Success or failure was measured by the number of countries ratifying the Protocol. And in the space of 18 months, we had increased the number of ratifications from one to 16! And the Protocol came into force in November 2006.

**3. What did it take to implement each of the three programs in terms of:**

**- Cost:**

Approximately \$10,000

**- Manpower**

Part-time programmer; part time information officer. Total of about 2 person months over an 18 month period

**- Equipment**

A SIM card attached to a computer.

**- Special skills or technology**

Special code was written to transfer information from the SIM card to a database.

**4. Do you have examples of campaigns or efforts in SMS and cell phone campaigns by Fahamu that ended up in failure? What did you learn from these efforts and how did your subsequent efforts change as a result?**

We ran a small pilot project in KwaZulu Natal on agricultural information for rural women. The cost of SMS proved an impediment to effective use. We realise that if we are to use SMS in rural communities, then funds need to be provided to cover costs of SMS, or free SMS needs to be negotiated.

**5. Based on your experience, are cell phones an effective tool to promote the mission and goals of Fahamu?**

That question is like asking whether pencils are an effective tool. Tools are just that, something that is used. Having pencils doesn't mean you will have good essays. It is how

they are used and for what end that counts. Since Fahamu seeks to explore how ICTs can be used in the cause of social justice, it seems sensible to explore the value of cell phones.

**6. Are there any plans for other SMS and cell phone-based initiatives in the near future? What types of campaigns do you have in mind?**

Yes, we want to experiment with using SMS/cell phones for use in election monitoring.

**7. What would you say would be the primary lessons learned in Fahamu's experience with cell phones in activism? What advice would you give to other organizations interested in exploring the use of cell phones in their work?**

Main lesson? Don't be romantic about tools. Be strategic, and recognise that they only complement, not substitute, for human interaction.

Hope the above helps.

With warm regards,

Firoze

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Firoze Manji

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Africa: In English: <http://www.pambazuka.org/en/>

In French: <http://www.pambazuka.org/fr/>

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<http://www.securegiving.co.uk/shop/fahamu/>

## APPENDIX B: Glossary (terms and names)

**Alison Fine:** Author of the book *Momentum: Igniting Social Change in the Connected Age*, Fine is a social activist who focuses on increasing citizen participation in communities and government.

**Blackberry:** A portable email, mobile phone, SMS device, organizer, contacts and web browser in one device. Some BlackBerries also include camera, media player, and a Global Positioning System.

**Blogs:** A user-generated website where entries are made in journal style and displayed in a reverse chronological order. Blogs provide commentary or news on a particular subject, such as food, politics, or local news; some function as personal online diaries. A typical blog combines text, images, and links to other blogs, web pages, and other media related to its topic.

**CD-ROM:** CD-ROM (an abbreviation of "Compact Disc read-only memory") is a Compact Disc that contains data accessible by a computer. While the Compact Disc format was originally designed for music storage and playback, the format was later adapted to hold any form of binary data.

**Civil Society:** Civil society is composed of voluntary civic and social organizations and institutions that form the basis of society as opposed to the structures of a state (regardless of that state's political system) and commercial institutions. Civil societies are populated by organizations such as registered charities, development non-governmental organizations, community groups, women's organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, trade unions, self-help groups, social movements, business associations, coalitions and advocacy groups.

**Content Aggregators:** An aggregator or news aggregator or feed reader is software that uses a web feed to retrieve syndicated web content such as blogs, podcasts, and mainstream mass media websites. Generally used for RSS or Atom feeds to keep track of updates to blogs, news sources, and other websites. (see Blogs, RSS and Websites)

**Database:** A collection of organized information in a regular structure, usually but not necessarily in a machine-readable format accessed by a computer. Or a software program for storing, retrieving and manipulating such information.

**Digg:** A community-based popularity website with an emphasis on technology and science articles. News stories and websites are submitted by users, and then promoted to the front page through a user-based ranking system.

**Distance-learning:** Education obtained remotely; often based on written correspondence material together with audio-visual material and sometimes summer schools and local tutorials

**Douglas Rushkoff:** A writer and media critic who focuses on the ways people, cultures, and institutions create, share, and influence each other's values. He sees "media" as the landscape where this interaction takes place, and "literacy" as the ability to participate consciously in it.

**Fahamu:** A non-government organization which supports the struggle for human rights and social justice in Africa through the innovative use of information and communication technologies.

**Firoze Manji:** Kenyan social activist and Executive Director and co-founder of Fahamu

**Flash Mob:** A group of people who converge on a spot at a specific time, perform some action, and disperse quickly

**Flickr:** A photo sharing website and web services suite, and an online community platform.

**GCAPSMS:** Acronym for the Global Call to Action Against Poverty SMS campaign. See SMS.

**Global Call to Action Against Poverty:** A loose alliance of more than 100 organizations from 26 countries across the African continent constitute the Africa coalition of the Global Call to Action Against Poverty. The coalition is part of the international alliance of 70 coalitions worldwide calling for debt cancellation, trade justice, better African governance and aid. See Make Poverty History.

**Global North and Global South:** The North-South divide is the socio-economic and political division that exists between the wealthy developed countries, known collectively as "the North", and the poorer developing countries (least developed countries), or "the South." Although most nations comprising the "North" are in fact located in the Northern Hemisphere, the divide is not primarily defined by geography.

**Howard Rheingold:** Author of *Smart Mobs: The Next Social Revolution*, Rheingold is a media critic and writer whose specialties are on the cultural, social and political implications of modern communication media such as the Internet, mobile telephony and virtual communities

**Internet:** A worldwide, publicly accessible network of interconnected computer networks. It is a "network of networks" that consists of millions of smaller domestic, academic, business, and government networks, which together carry various information and services, such as electronic mail, online chat, file transfer, and the interlinked Web pages.

**Jerome Armstrong and Markos Moulitsas:** Authors of *Crashing the Gate: Grassroots, Netroots, and the Rise of People Powered Politics*. The book takes a critical look at the

state of the Democratic Party, detailing the rise of a new, Internet-based movement to reform the Democratic Party.

**Jonathan Donner:** A researcher in the Technology for Emerging Markets Group at Microsoft Research India in Bangalore. He is a social scientist, with a background in Communication Research and Economic Development.

**Justin Oberman:** A new media communications consultant. He specializes in consulting for corporations, non-profits, political campaigns or movements and individuals to effectively harness the power of social media. He writes about mobile technology in Mopocket.com.

**Katrin Verclas:** Coordinates the secretariat of MobileActive, a global network of activists and campaigners using mobile phones for civic action and engagement. She is also the Executive Director of N-TEN (Nonprofit Technology Network), a membership organization of nonprofit professionals who put technology to use for their causes.

**Make Poverty History:** A coalition of charities, religious groups, trade unions, campaigning groups and celebrities who mobilized around the U.K.'s prominence in world politics in 2005 to increase awareness and pressure governments into taking actions towards relieving poverty. The symbol of the campaign was a white bracelet made of cotton or silicone.

**Mark Surman and Katherine Reilly:** Reilly is an independent researcher and consultant working on social and political aspects of new technologies in Canada and Latin America. Surman develops community-based media projects and is the president of Commons Group, an Internet research and strategy organization serving civil society organizations.

**Message Boards:** A system in which users may send, read and reply to messages of interest to no particular person; an electronic bulletin board.

**Miniclip:** A games, entertainment and virtual community website. The Miniclip.com site offers browser-based games, cartoons and Ecards.

**Mobile Phones:** (or cell phone) A long-range, portable electronic device used for mobile communication. In addition to the standard voice function of a telephone, mobile phones can support many additional services such as text messaging, email, access to the Internet, and sending and receiving photos and video.

**MobileActive:** A global network of activists and campaigners using mobile phones for civic action and engagement. Their web site is [www.mobileactive.org](http://www.mobileactive.org)

**MySpace:** A popular social networking website offering an interactive, user-submitted network of friends, personal profiles, blogs, groups, photos, music and videos internationally.

**NGO:** The term non-governmental organization (NGO) is used in a variety of ways all over the world and, depending on the context in which it is used, can refer to many different types of organizations. In its broadest sense, a non-governmental organization is one that is not directly part of the structure of government. Apart from 'NGO' alternative terms used are independent sector, volunteer sector, civil society, grassroots organizations, transnational social movement organizations, private voluntary organizations, self-help organizations and non-state actors (NSAs). See Civil Society.

**Okoth Frederick Mudhai:** A postgraduate researcher and part-time tutor in International Relations at the Nottingham Trent University, UK.

**Opt-in:** Opt in is a term originally used when someone is given the option to receive "bulk" e-mail, that is, e-mail that is sent to many people at the same time. Obtaining permission before sending e-mail is critical because without it, the e-mail is unsolicited bulk email, better known as spam. The term has also been used in relation to receiving text messages from an organization or a campaign.

**Phone Tree:** A prearranged, pyramid-shaped system for activating a group of people by telephone. Using the phone tree system can spread a brief message quickly and efficiently to a large number of people.

**Podcast:** A digital media file or a series of such files distributed over the Internet using syndication feeds, for playback on portable media players and personal computers. A podcast is a specific type of webcast which, like 'radio', can mean either the content itself or the method by which it is syndicated.

**Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa:** International law which explicitly sets forth the reproductive right of women to medical abortion when pregnancy results from rape or incest or when the continuation of pregnancy endangers the health or life of the mother. The Protocol explicitly calls for the legal prohibition of female genital mutilation, and prohibits the abuse of women in advertising and pornography. The Protocol sets forth a broad range of economic and social welfare rights for women. The rights of particularly vulnerable groups of women, including widows, elderly women, disabled women and "women in distress," which includes poor women, women from marginalized populations groups, and pregnant or nursing women in detention are specifically recognized.

**Richard Kahn and Douglas Kellner:** Kahn is a PhD student in the Social Sciences and Comparative Education division of the Graduate School of Education at the University of California-Los Angeles (UCLA). Kellner is George Kneller Chair in the Philosophy of Education at UCLA and is author of many books on social theory, politics, history, and culture.

**Ringtone:** The sound made by a telephone when ringing, especially the customizable tone of a mobile phone

**RSS feed:** RSS is a family of web feed formats used to publish frequently updated digital content, such as blogs, news feeds or podcasts. Users of RSS use software programs called "feed readers" or "feed aggregators". The user subscribes to a feed by entering a link to the feed into the reader program. The reader can then check the subscribed feeds to see if any of those feeds have new content since the last time it checked and retrieved content.

**Second Life:** An Internet-based virtual world developed by Linden Lab. A downloadable client program enables its users, called "Residents", to interact with each other through avatars or online alter egos. Residents can explore, meet other Residents, socialize, participate in individual and group activities, create and trade items (virtual property) and services from one another.

**SIM:** A Subscriber Identity Module (SIM) is a removable smart card which stores securely the key identifying a mobile phone service subscriber. The SIM card allows users to change phones easily by removing the SIM card and inserting it into another mobile phone, thereby eliminating the need for activation of the new mobile phone on the network.

**SMS:** Short Message Service (SMS) is a telecommunications protocol that allows the sending of "short" (160 characters or less) text messages. It is available on most digital mobile phones and some personal digital assistants. The individual messages which are sent are called text messages, and more colloquially SMSes, texts, or even txts.

**Social Media:** Social media describes the online technologies and practices that people use to share opinions, insights, experiences, and perspectives with each other. Social media can take many different forms, including text, images, audio, and video.

**Text Messaging:** see SMS

**Texting:** see SMS

**Vlogs:** Blogs that are comprised of video footage. see Blogs.

**Web site:** A collection of web pages, images, videos and other digital assets and hosted on a particular domain or subdomain on the World Wide Web. See Internet.

**Wiki:** A web site that allows visitors to add, remove, edit and change content, typically without the need for registration. It also allows for linking among any number of pages. This ease of interaction and operation makes a wiki an effective tool for collaborative authoring.

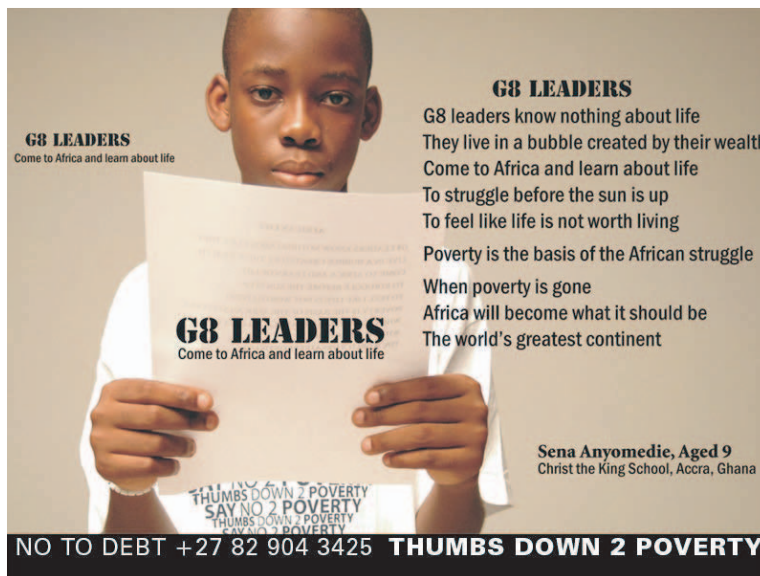
**YouTube:** A popular video sharing website where users can upload, view, and share video clips. Videos can be rated, and the average rating and the number of times a video has been watched are both published.



APPENDIX C  
Fahamu SMS Campaign Sample Materials



from <http://www.gcapsms.org>

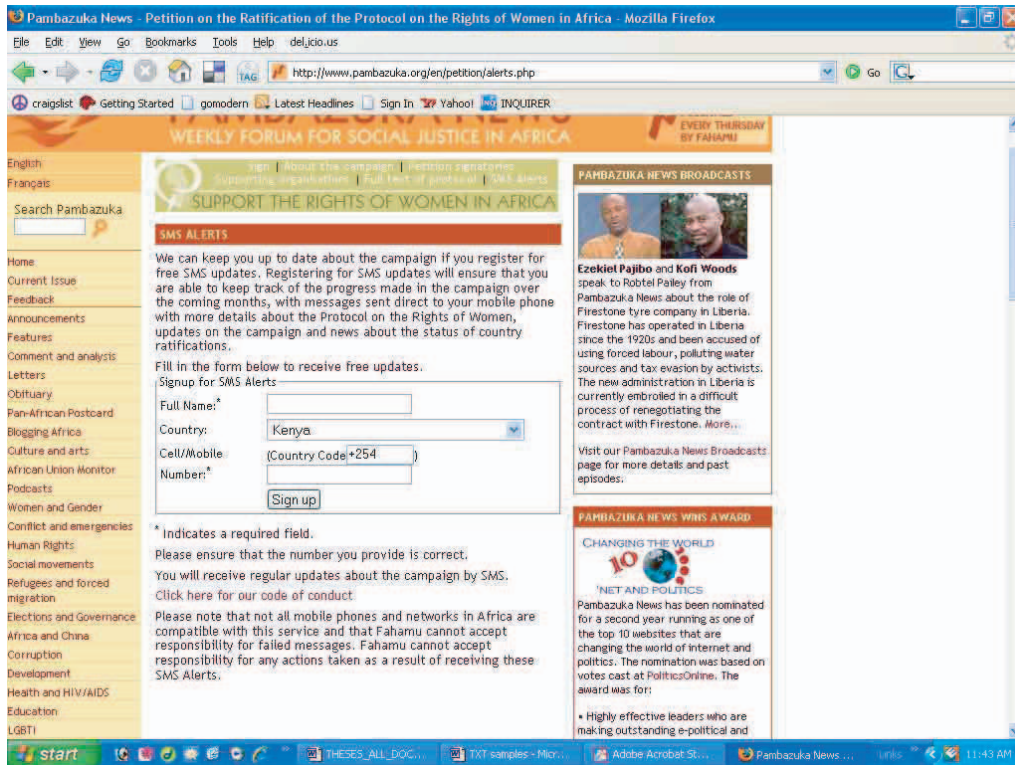


from <http://www.gcapsms.org/downloads/senapoem-800x600.jpg>

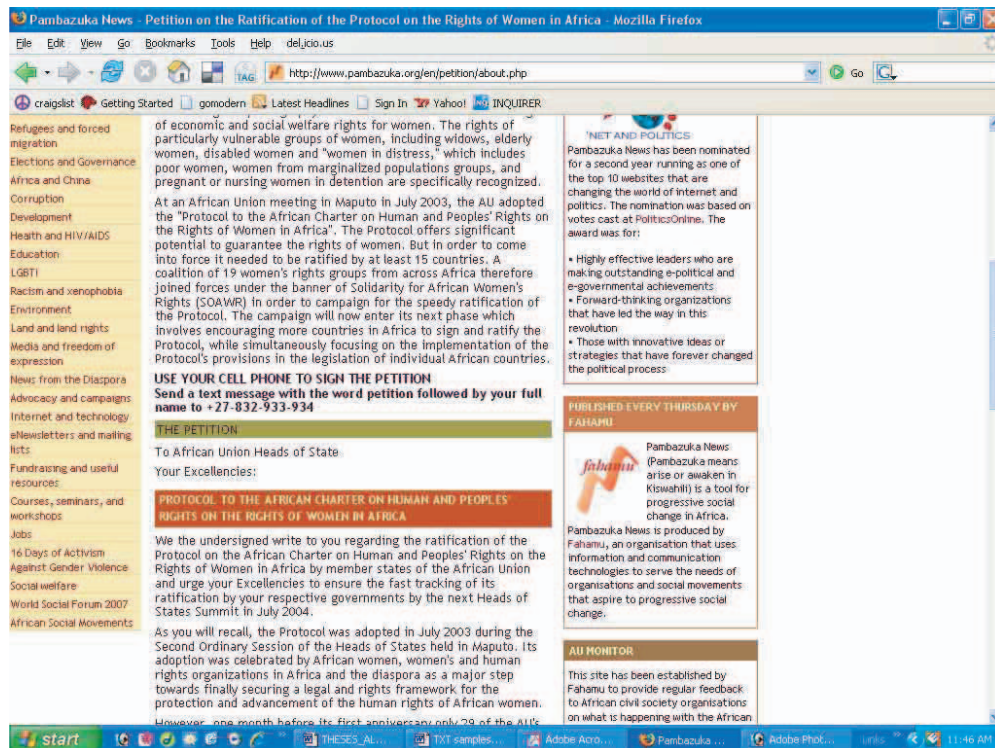


from <http://www.gcapsms.org/downloads/Youssour-Ndour-800x600.jpg>

# Protocol campaign website announcements



from <http://www.pambazuka.org/en/petition/alerts.php>



from <http://www.pambazuka.org/en/petition/about.php>

Sample text messages from the Protocol and the GCAPSMS campaigns



from <http://gcapsms.org/smslist.php>



from Gertz, Emily. "Fahamu: Pan-African Text Messaging for Social Justice." October 31, 2005. World Changing. <http://www.worldchanging.com/archives/003694.html> (accessed March 20, 2007).