Universities for Ushahidi (2011)

The Universities for Ushahidi (U4U) program was a 2010 partnerships between Ushahidi and the United States Institute for Peace (USIP) to develop a unique, open curriculum and training program for students to develop core skills for conflict management, real-time mapping, and promote peacebuilding initiatives in their own communities.

While deemed a success from both partners, the U4U program did not extend into a second year and event. The following is an archive of the website (u4u.ushahidi.com), which was formally closed in April 2012.

ABOUT

Networks of student volunteers played a unique role in the disaster response to Haiti and Chile, creating live crisis maps of local needs on the ground. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Administrator Craig Fugate publicly noted that the student-created crisis map of Haiti was the most comprehensive and up-to-date map available to the humanitarian community. According to other responders, the map helped save hundred of lives.

Convinced that student networks around the world can replicate this kind of response beyond disaster relief, Ushahidi's Patrick Meier approached the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) to pitch Universities for Ushahidi (U4U). Students have always been important drivers of social, political and economic change worldwide. So the purpose of U4U is to connect and catalyze a global network of proactive students trained in collaborative mapping technologies, activism and peacebuilding. The partnership with USIP will provide students and educators with free, open and online materials – dedicated documentation, webinars, interviews, videos, screencasts, etc. – to transfer technical knowledge on real-time mapping and core skills in peacebuilding. The first group of U4U students will be selected and trained in June 2011.

U4U's strategy combines offline and online training. For the former, U4U will bring students from developing countries to USIP so they can learn how to use and fully leverage the Ushahidi platform and related tools in their own countries. The first group of U4U students will be selected and trained in June 2011. Ushahidi is a simple information collection and mapping tool. The platform is free and open source and often combined with crowdsourcing to document crisis information using information from the Web, SMS, Facebook, Blogs, Twitter and smartphone applications. Ushahidi was initially used to crowdsource the documentation of human rights abuses during Kenya's 2007 elections. Since then, the platform has been used to create live maps of violence in Gaza, local governance in India, elections in the Sudan, environmental disasters in the US, and the disaster response in Haiti — to name just a few applications.

Our online training strategy will complement the offline training at USIP. It will also allow us to scale so we can reach out to thousands more students worldwide. We're committed to working with students who wish to take the initiative in creating their own U4U student groups on their campuses or U4U MeetUp groups in their own communities. This website will help connect interested them and will provide a space for students to join the conversations, learn more about the mapping tools and how to use them effectively for crisis response and peacebuilding. To learn more about USIP's Center of Innovation for Science, Technology and Peacebuilding, please visit: http://www.usip.org/programs/centers/science-technology-and-peacebuilding.

OPEN CURRICULUM

Any successful response to a crisis, an election monitoring campaign, to larger scale peacebuilding programs or even smaller scale community efforts means going well beyond the technology. That's why, as we put together this curriculum, we want to offer far more than training on the Ushahidi platform.

What we hope is that the end result will be a comprehensive, introductory course into several platforms, including case studies, simulation exercises, and screencasts, all in a format that goes beyond the normal documentation and promotes true online learning.

However, to cover only these technology would be to provide the tools for a successful response but not the blueprints. So, in addition, USIP is recalibrating several of their existing courses to help cover the other 90%, the most critical of any community-driven crisis, monitoring, or peacebuilding engagement. USIP has a long history of education and training with a mission very much inline with Ushahidi's goals. From their website:

USIP works domestically and internationally to:

- Create and deliver courses and supporting teaching materials to improve the practice of conflict management and help professionalize the field.
- Help international practitioners improve the skills required to manage conflict in all its phases, from prevention to post-conflict peacebuilding
- Promote peace by working through educational systems in fragile states and societies emerging from conflict.

To create the best possible materials Ushahidi & USIP are turning to several other partners, organizations, and existing student groups to help us with this endeavor. This will be a transparent process; as we complete these materials we'll be putting them online. We'd also like to consider this a combined effort as well, being sure to solicit feedback from anyone adopting any or all of these materials so we can continuously improve and

expand what we have to offer you.

This curriculum represents both what we will be presenting to students during the June 2011 training program at USIP as well as what we will be made available online for free and open distribution.

This curriculum is currently in draft format and subject to change.

Introduction to Mapping Technology & Peacebuilding

- Our mission & program goals
- What we'll be covering
- What is live mapping?
- What is peacebuilding?

Ushahidi

- Overview to the platform
- Installation & configuration
- Managing reports & messages

FrontlineSMS

- Overview to the platform
- Installation & configuration
- Managing reports & messages

OpenStreetMap

- Overview to the project
- Creating, tracing & editing
- Security & Telecommunications

Understanding the role of security in deployments

- Shortcodes & building relationships
- Various USIP training courses on topics such as conflict prevention, capacity building, and human security.

Closing discussion / Simulation

Presentation of certificates

- Student networking