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OCAPHGEARS UP FOR CITIZEN CROWDSOURCING ACTION

AS AUGUST 9 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN HAITI APPROACH

Voters will cast their ballots for two-thirds of the Senate and the entire Chamber of Deputies.

Observatoire Citoyen de L'Action des Pouvoirs Publics en Haiti (OCAPH), also known as Haiti CitizenWatchdog, has announced its latest effort to bolster citizen involvement in upcoming elections -- in this case, as election observers who document what they witness using their cellphones.

“OCAPH has teamed up with a coalition of like-minded civil society and human rights indigenous groups to mount Haiti’s first-ever election monitoring action based on coordinated crowdsourcing,” says Karl Jean-Louis, the organization’s Senior Governance Advisor. He continues, “Our focus will be on documenting what happens *outside* individual polling stations. We will complement the efforts of other observers located inside the stations.”

OCAPH and POHDH (a human rights coalition) plan to mobilize up to 1,000 ‘citizen journalists’ armed with their cellphones on August 9th, explains Jean-Louis. He says the OCAPH-POHDH crowdsourcing action will take place in targeted communities within four departments: West, North East, Center, and the Artibonite. These communities have been selected because they may be at relatively higher risk of election-related violence and fraud than other locations.

The coalition’s citizen journalists will be trained using a specially-created Election Observer Guide. Then, on election day, they will fan out to their assigned polling stations to be eye witnesses and document exactly what is taking place outside each location. As they observe, they will receive updates on the state of security, the level of citizen turnout, and announcements about special election-related services available to groups such as the disabled who wish to vote. The digital records they create on the spot, in the form of photos, videos, and SMS messages, will be submitted to a central platform provided

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by mobile phone network provider Digicel. There, the data will be verified, compiled, posted online (including OCAPH's website), and widely disseminated to media outlets. Reports requiring urgent action will be shared with the National Police and officials of the CEP (Provisional Electoral Council), the body responsible for overseeing the election.

“Our ultimate goal is to harness digital technology to decrease election-related violence, protect human rights, and increase civic engagement in our democratic system of government,” says Jean-Louis.

For more information on the crowdsourcing event and OCAPH's other pre-election work, contact OCAPH Senior Governance Advisor Karl Jean-Louis at karl@ocaph.org , (509) 47-78-44-44, or Outreach Director Elaine Koerner at elainek@ocaph.org . OCAPH's website is www.ocaph.org .