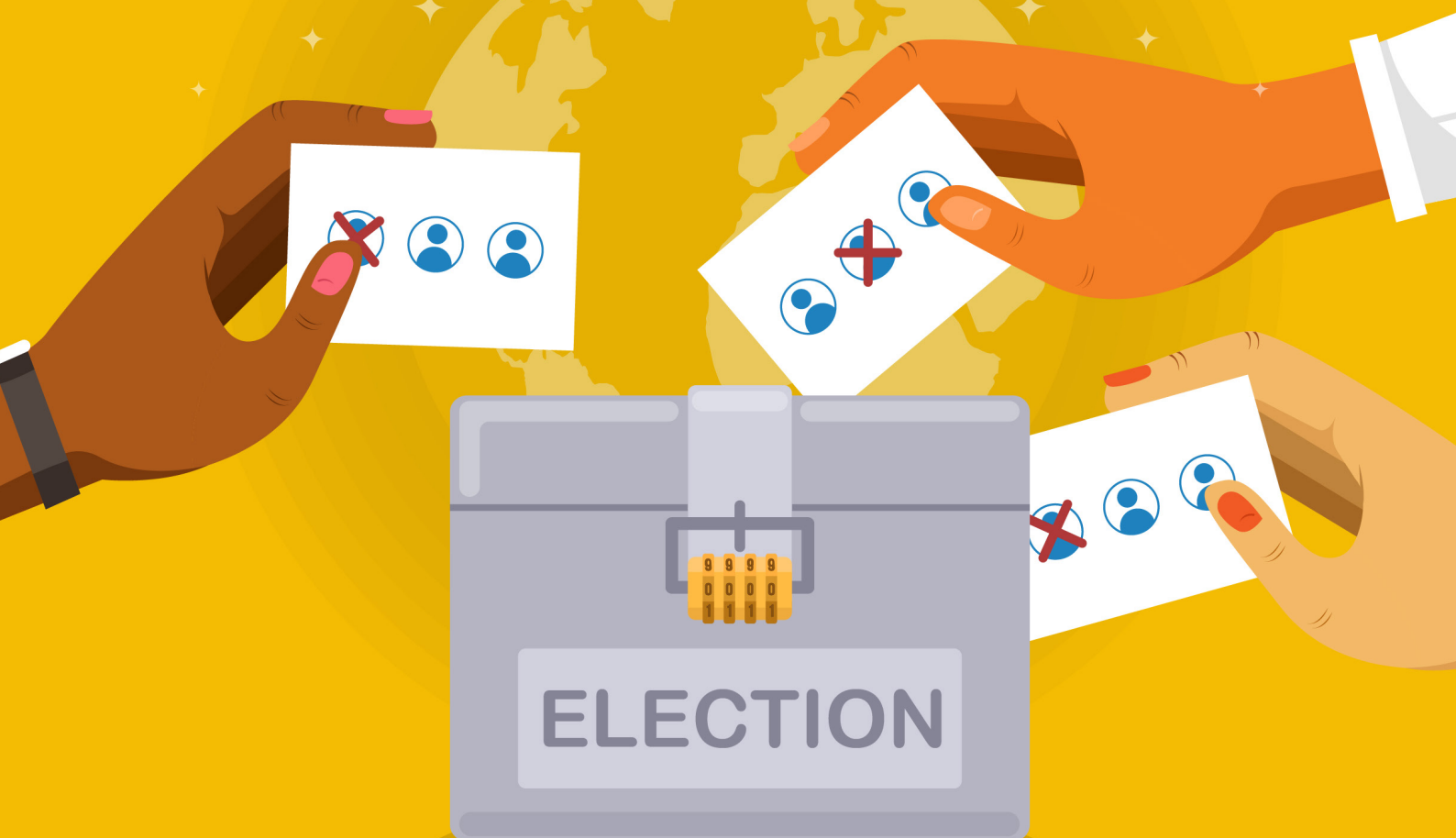


DEVELOPING A CIVIC TECH AND ELECTION FACT-CHECKING TOOLKIT



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I. INTRODUCTION



ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

This Civic Tech and Election Fact-Checking Toolkit has been developed by two African Union Media Fellowship (AUMF) 2.0 fellows, Jibi Moses and Maurice Thantan. Jibi is a fact-checker from South Sudan, and Thantan is a digital journalist and web professional from Benin. This duo's toolkit focuses on leveraging civic technology to combat election misinformation.

As a part of the production process for this toolkit, over 100 journalists and content creators across Africa received online and in-person training. This resource is designed mainly for journalists and content creators as a tool to help them verify information and report accurate news before, during, and after elections.



II. FACT-CHECKING FUNDAMENTALS



A QUICK GUIDE

1.1 Information Disorder: A Growing Challenge

Information disorder is a broad term encompassing various forms of misinformation and disinformation that can spread rapidly in the digital age. It can lead to significant societal problems, including polarisation, distrust of institutions, and even violence.

Key Types of Information Disorder:

Misinformation: false information that is spread unintentionally.

Disinformation: false information that is spread intentionally to deceive or manipulate.

Malinformation: information that is based on fact but is used out of context to mislead, harm, or manipulate. The main intent is actually to cause harm. It differs from misinformation and disinformation in that it is not entirely false.

Propaganda: information that is systematically spread to promote a particular ideology or agenda.

Clickbait: exaggerated or misleading content designed to attract clicks and attention.

Deepfakes: highly realistic fabricated media, such as videos or audio recordings, that can be used to spread false information.



Factors Contributing to Information Disorder:

Social media: The rapid spread of information on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram can amplify misinformation and disinformation.

Algorithmic biases: Algorithms used by social media platforms can reinforce existing biases and promote sensational or divisive content.

Lack of media literacy: Many people may not have the skills to critically evaluate information and distinguish between fact and fiction.

Political polarisation: A polarised political environment can make people more susceptible to believing information that confirms their existing beliefs.

Addressing Information Disorder:

Media literacy education: Promoting media literacy can help people develop the skills to evaluate information critically.

Fact-checking organizations: Supporting fact-checking organizations can help identify and debunk misinformation.

Platform accountability: encouraging social media platforms to take steps to combat misinformation and disinformation.

Government policies: Implementing policies that promote transparency and accountability in information dissemination.

1.2 FACT-CHECKING

Fact-checking is the process of verifying the accuracy of information, especially claims made in the media. It's essential in today's world, where misinformation and disinformation spread rapidly.

Here are some fundamental principles to keep in mind:

a. Verify the source:

Reliability: Is the source reputable? Check its history, biases, and affiliations.

Expertise: Does the source have the necessary knowledge or experience to make the claim?

Independence: Is the source independent or influenced by external factors?

b. Check for Corroboration:

Multiple Sources: Are there multiple, independent sources confirming the information?

Evidence: Is there supporting evidence, such as data, documents, or eyewitness accounts?

c. Be sceptical of sensational claims:

Outrageous Statements: Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence.

Emotional Appeals: Be cautious of information that plays on emotions.

d. Beware of Bias:

Personal Beliefs: Recognise your own biases and how they might influence your judgement.

Confirmation Bias: Avoid seeking information that confirms your existing beliefs.

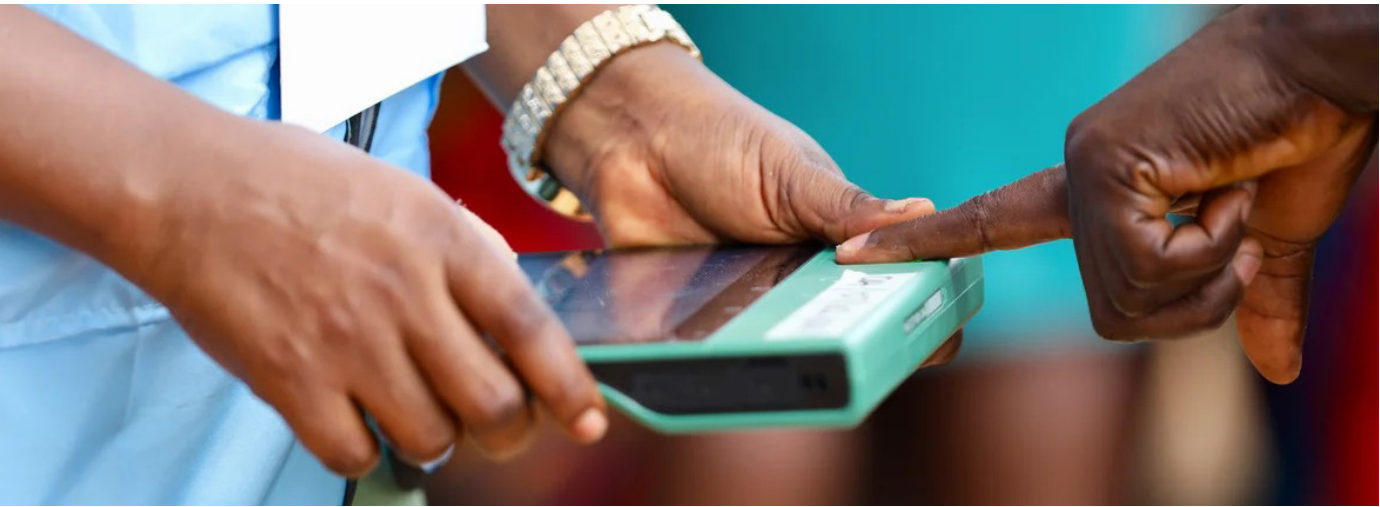
e. Use Fact-Checking Tools:

Online Resources: Utilize websites like Snopes, PolitiFact, and FactCheck.org.

Reverse Image Search: Check the origin and context of images.

f. Context Matters:

Date and Time: Consider the time period and context when the information was created. **Changes Over Time:** Be aware of how information can evolve or be misinterpreted.



g. Be Patient and Thorough:

Take Your Time: Fact-checking can be time-consuming.

Avoid Hasty Conclusions: Don't rush to judgement based on incomplete information.

GUIDE TO FACT-CHECKING METHODOLOGIES AND BEST PRACTICES:

Overview of the fact-checking process. (claim identification, evidence gathering, analysis, rating)

A Step-by-Step Guide

The fact-checking process involves a systematic approach to verifying the accuracy of information. Here's a general overview of the steps involved:

1. Identify the Claim:

Clearly define the specific statement or claim you want to verify.

2. Assess the Source:

Credibility: Evaluate the source's reputation, expertise, and bias.

Independence: Determine if the source is independent or influenced by external factors.

History: Check the source's past record for accuracy and reliability.

3. Gather Evidence:

Multiple Sources: Seek information from various reliable sources to corroborate or contradict the claim.

Primary Sources: If possible, consult original documents, data, or eyewitness accounts.

Secondary Sources: Use reputable news outlets, academic journals, or government reports.

4. Analyze the Evidence:

Consistency: Check for consistency between different sources and the claim.

Context: Consider the context in which the information was presented.

Bias: Be aware of potential biases in the evidence.

5. Evaluate the Claim:

Accuracy: Determine if the claim is supported by the evidence.

Relevance: Assess whether the evidence is relevant to the claim.

Sufficiency: Evaluate if the evidence is sufficient to prove the claim.

6. Consider Alternative Explanations:

Counterarguments: Explore alternative explanations or counterarguments.

Refutation: Assess the strength of the counterarguments and whether they can be refuted.

7. Draw Conclusions:

Verdict: Based on the evidence and analysis, determine whether the claim is true, false, or uncertain.

Reasoning: Clearly explain your reasoning and the evidence supporting your conclusion.

8. Document Your Findings:



Record: Keep a record of your research process, including sources, evidence, and conclusions.

Cite Sources: Properly cite your sources to give credit and allow others to verify your findings.

DIFFERENT FACT-CHECKING FORMATS

A Quick Overview

Fact-checking can take various forms depending on the complexity of the claim, the available evidence, and the target audience. Here are some common formats:

1. FULL FACT-CHECK:

In-depth Investigation: A comprehensive analysis of the claim, often involving extensive research and examination of multiple sources.

Detailed Explanation: Provides a detailed explanation of the evidence, reasoning, and conclusions.

Suitable for Complex Claims: Best suited for claims that require in-depth analysis and scrutiny.

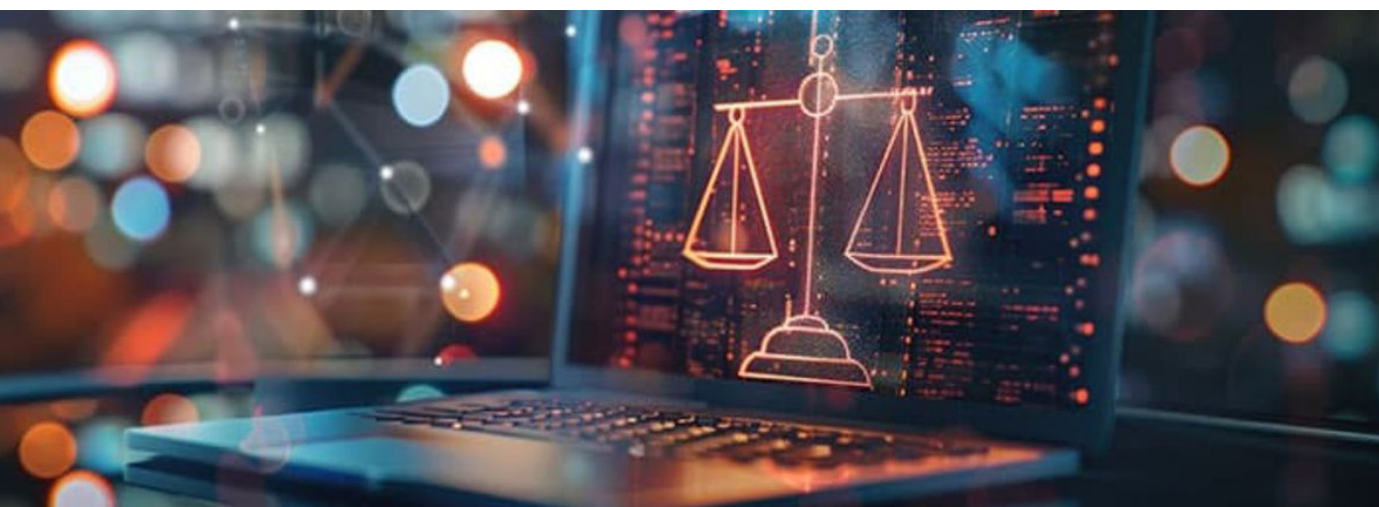
2. SHORT FACT-CHECK:

Concise Verification: A brief assessment of the claim's accuracy, often based on readily available information.

Quick Reference: Provides a quick and easy way to verify the claim.

Suitable for Simple Claims: Ideal for claims that can be verified with minimal research.

Short fact-checks often focus on quickly debunking or verifying a single, specific claim. They are common on social media and in rapid-response fact-checking



efforts. Here are some examples of what a short fact-check might look like:

Examples:

Image Verification:

Claim: “This photo shows a recent flood in Juba.”

Short Fact-Check: “This image is from a 2018 flood in Kampala. A reverse image search confirms its origin.”

Quote Verification:

Claim: “Former U.S. President Obama said, ‘I will come back to contest for the presidency in the next elections.’”

Short Fact-Check: “There’s no credible source attributing this quote to the former US president. It’s likely a misattribution.”

Viral Rumour Debunk:

Claim: “Sharing this post will cause Facebook to donate money.”

Short Fact-Check: “This is a recurring hoax. Facebook does not donate money based on shared posts.”

Video Verification:

Claim: “This video shows a recent event.”

Short Fact-Check: “This video is from an event that happened in a previous year. Evidence of this can be found by looking at the metadata of the video and by searching for the event that is shown within the video.”

Key Characteristics of Short Fact-Checks:

Concise: They get straight to the point.

Focused: They address one specific claim.

Source-Driven: They often provide a quick link or reference to a credible source.

Rapid: They aim to provide information quickly, especially in response to fast-spreading misinformation.

3. EXPLAINERS:

Suitable for Misunderstood Topics: Helpful for clarifying misconceptions and providing additional context.

Example: “Explainer” is a broad term, but it commonly refers to content that simplifies complex information or processes. Here’s a breakdown of examples across different formats:

1. EXPLAINER VIDEOS:

Animated Explainer Videos:

These use 2D or 3D animation to represent concepts visually. They are excellent for abstract ideas or software demonstrations.

Example: A video explaining how cloud-based software works using animated characters and graphics.

Whiteboard Animation:

These feature hand-drawn illustrations on a whiteboard, often with a voiceover.
Example: A video explaining a historical event or a scientific theory.

Live-Action Explainer Videos:

These use real people to explain a product or service.

Example: A video demonstrating how to use a kitchen appliance.

2. WRITTEN EXPLAINERS:

Articles:

“How-to” articles that provide step-by-step instructions.

Articles that break down complex news events or scientific studies.

Infographics:

Visual representations of data and information, often with concise text.

Example: An infographic explaining the effects of climate change.

FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions):

Lists of common questions and answers about a product, service, or topic.

Key Characteristics of Effective Explainers:

Clarity: Using simple language and visuals.

Conciseness: Getting to the point quickly.

Visual Appeal: Using engaging visuals to maintain interest.

Focus: Concentrating on the essential information.

Structure: Organizing information logically.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN FACT-CHECKING

Fact-checking, while crucial for combating misinformation, is itself a practice laden with ethical considerations. Here are some of the key ethical dilemmas and responsibilities that fact-checkers face:

ACCURACY AND OBJECTIVITY:

Striving for Truth: The most fundamental ethical obligation is the commitment to accuracy. Fact-checkers must meticulously verify information, relying on credible sources and evidence. They must avoid bias, ensuring their personal beliefs do not influence their assessments.

Context matters: Facts presented in isolation can be misleading. Fact-checkers must consider the context in which a claim is made, ensuring their analysis is fair and comprehensive.

Transparency: Fact-checkers should be transparent about their methodology,

sources, and any potential biases. This allows audiences to assess the credibility of the fact-check.

Impartiality and Fairness:

Avoiding Partisanship: Fact-checkers should be impartial and avoid taking sides. Their role is to assess the accuracy of claims, not to promote a particular viewpoint.

Fair Treatment: Fact-checkers should treat all claims and sources fairly, regardless of their origin or the speaker's identity.

Responding to Criticism: Fact-checkers should be open to criticism and willing to correct errors. This demonstrates accountability and a commitment to accuracy.

POTENTIAL HARM:

Impact on Individuals: Fact-checking can have real-world consequences for individuals, especially politicians and public figures. Fact-checkers must be mindful of the potential harm their assessments can cause to reputations and livelihoods.

Amplifying Misinformation: In some cases, fact-checking can inadvertently amplify misinformation by drawing more attention to it. Fact-checkers must carefully consider the potential consequences of their work.

Privacy Concerns: Fact-checking may involve accessing personal information. Fact-checkers must respect privacy and avoid disclosing sensitive information unnecessarily.

Responsibility to the Public:

Serving the Public Interest: The primary responsibility of fact-checkers is to



serve the public interest by providing accurate and reliable information.

Empowering Citizens: Fact-checking should empower citizens to make informed decisions by providing them with the tools and knowledge to critically evaluate information.

Promoting Media Literacy: Fact-checkers can play a role in promoting media literacy by educating the public about how to identify misinformation and evaluate sources.

Evolving Challenges:

New Technologies: The rapid development of new technologies, such as AI-generated content, presents new challenges for fact-checkers. They must adapt their methods and tools to stay ahead of these evolving threats.

Global Collaboration: Misinformation often spreads across borders. Fact-checkers must collaborate internationally to combat this global problem.

Ethical Frameworks: The field of fact-checking needs clear ethical frameworks and guidelines to ensure its integrity and effectiveness.

In conclusion, fact-checking is a complex and ethically challenging endeavour. Fact-checkers must be committed to accuracy, impartiality, and transparency. They must be mindful of the potential harm their work can cause and strive to serve the public interest by providing reliable information and promoting media literacy.

HANDLING DIFFICULT SOURCES AND INFORMATION.

Difficult sources can range from biased or misleading information to complex or technical topics. Here are some common challenges:

Bias: Sources may have a particular viewpoint that influences their reporting.

Misinformation: incorrect or false information.

Complexity: Topics may be highly technical or require specialized knowledge.

Language: The source may use jargon or unfamiliar terms.

Strategies for Handling Difficult Sources

Critical Thinking:

Evaluate credibility: Consider the source's reputation, expertise, and potential biases.

Analyze evidence: Assess the quality and relevance of the evidence presented.

Identify logical fallacies: Be aware of common errors in reasoning.

Fact-Checking:

Verify information: Use multiple sources to confirm facts.

Consult reliable sources: refer to reputable organizations, academic journals, or government agencies.

Check for updates: Ensure the information is current.

Contextualisation:

Consider the broader context: Understand the historical, cultural, or social factors that may influence the information.

Analyze perspectives: Examine different viewpoints on the topic.

Seeking Expertise:

Consult experts: Seek advice from individuals with specialized knowledge.

Join communities: Participate in online forums or communities where experts discuss the topic.

Effective Note-Taking:

Summarise key points: Condense the information into your own words.

Cite sources: Properly attribute information to its original source.

Organize information: Use a consistent system to structure your notes.

Examples of Difficult Sources

Sensationalist news outlets may prioritise sensationalism over accuracy.

Political propaganda: may present information in a biased way to promote a particular agenda.

Scientific research papers: Can be highly technical and require specialized knowledge.

Historical documents may be incomplete or biased due to the perspective of the author.

PROTECTING SOURCES AND STAYING SAFE

When working with sensitive information or confidential sources, it's essential to prioritise their safety and maintain the integrity of your work. Here are some key strategies:

1. Confidentiality agreements:

Formalise agreements: Have sources sign confidentiality agreements that outline the terms of your relationship and the obligations to protect their information.

Specify scope: Clearly define the scope of the agreement, including the type of information being shared and the duration of the confidentiality.

2. Secure Communication:

Use encrypted channels: Employ secure messaging apps or encrypted email to protect communications from interception. For example, Signal, WhatsApp, Telegram, & Threema.

Avoid public spaces: Conduct sensitive conversations in private settings to minimise the risk of eavesdropping.

3. Anonymity and pseudonyms:

Protect identities: If necessary, allow sources to remain anonymous or use pseudonyms to safeguard their privacy.

Consider alternative methods: Explore methods like drop boxes or encrypted email to facilitate anonymous communication.

4. Data Security:

Secure storage: Store sensitive information on encrypted devices or cloud storage with robust security measures.

Regular backups: Create regular backups of your data to prevent loss in case of a breach.

Access controls: Implement strong access controls to limit who can view and modify sensitive information.

5. Ethical Considerations:

Respect privacy: Always prioritize the privacy and well-being of your sources.

Avoid harm: Be mindful of the potential consequences of disclosing information that could harm individuals or organizations.

Seek legal advice: Consult with legal experts to ensure compliance with relevant laws and regulations.

6. Emergency preparedness:

Have a plan: Develop a plan for handling emergencies, such as data breaches or threats to your safety.

Identify resources: Know who to contact in case of a crisis, including law enforcement, legal professionals, or mental health support services.

7. Self-Care:

Prioritise well-being: Take care of your physical and mental health to maintain your ability to handle sensitive information.

Seek support: If you're dealing with stressful situations, don't hesitate to seek support from friends, family, or mental health professionals.

III.CIVIC TECH TOOLS AND RESOURCES



Civic tech tools and resources are digital tools and platforms that empower citizens to engage with their governments, communities, and each other to address public challenges and improve civic life. These tools leverage technology to foster transparency, participation, and accountability in governance. Here are some key categories and examples:

1. OPEN DATA PLATFORMS

Purpose: Provide access to public data, enabling citizens and organizations to analyze and utilize information for various purposes, such as research, advocacy, and civic innovation.

Examples:

Data.gov (USA): A portal for accessing open data from the US federal government.

Open Data for Africa: A platform providing access to open data from various African countries.

Local government open data portals: Many cities and regions have their own open data portals.



2. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PLATFORMS

Purpose: Facilitate communication and interaction between citizens and governments, enabling citizens to provide feedback, participate in decision-making, and collaborate on public projects.

Examples:

CitizenLab: A platform for participatory budgeting, idea generation, and community feedback.

Bang the Table: A platform for online consultations and community engagement.

Change.org: A platform for online petitions and advocacy.

3. REPORTING AND ISSUE TRACKING TOOLS

Purpose: Allow citizens to report issues and problems in their communities, such as potholes, broken streetlights, or service delivery failures, and track their resolution.

Examples:

SeeClickFix: A platform for reporting and tracking non-emergency issues.

FixMyStreet (UK): A platform for reporting and tracking street problems.

Your Voice (South Africa): A platform for reporting service delivery issues.

4. CIVIC CROWDFUNDING AND FUNDRAISING PLATFORMS

Purpose: Enable citizens to raise funds for community projects, initiatives, or causes they care about.

Examples:

Kickstarter: A platform for funding creative and community projects.

ioby: A platform for funding neighborhood projects.

M-Changa (Kenya): A platform for mobile fundraising.

5. VOTING AND ELECTION PLATFORM:

Purpose: Facilitate online voting, voter registration, and access to election information.

Examples:

Smartmatic: A provider of election technology and services.

Democracy Earth: A platform for liquid democracy and online voting.

Voter information websites: Provide information on candidates, elections, and voting procedures.

6. COMMUNITY ORGANIZING AND COLLABORATION TOOLS

Purpose: Support community organizing, collaboration, and collective action on local issues.

Examples:

Meetup: A platform for organizing local groups and events.

Nextdoor: A social network for neighborhoods.

Loomio: A platform for collaborative decision-making.

7. FACT-CHECKING AND MISINFORMATION COMBATTING TOOLS

Purpose: Help citizens and journalists verify information and combat the spread of misinformation and disinformation.

Examples:

Africa Check: A fact-checking organization focused on Africa.

211Check: A fact-checking and information verification organisation based in South Sudan.

237Check: A fact-checking and information verification organisation based in Cameroon.

Code For Africa

FactCheck.org: A fact-checking website in the US.

Snopes: A website debunking rumors and urban legends.

8. CIVIC EDUCATION AND AWARENESS PLATFORMS

Purpose: Provide citizens with information and resources on civic engagement, democracy, and governance.

Examples:

USA.gov: The US government's official web portal.

Parliament websites: Provide information on parliamentary proceedings and legislation.

Civic education NGOs: Offer resources and programs on civic engagement.

9. ACCESSIBILITY TOOLS

Purpose: Ensure that civic tech tools and platforms are accessible to everyone, including people with disabilities.

Examples:

Screen readers: software that reads text aloud for visually impaired users.

Captioning and transcription services: Provide text versions of audio and video content.

Assistive technologies: Various tools that help people with disabilities access and use technology.

10. DIGITAL SECURITY AND PRIVACY TOOLS

Purpose: Protect citizens' data and privacy when using civic tech tools and platforms.

Examples:

Encrypted messaging apps: Signal, WhatsApp (end-to-end encryption).

VPNs: Virtual Private Networks for secure internet browsing.

Password managers: Help create and store strong passwords.

Resources for Finding Civic Tech Tools:

Civic Tech Field Guide: A global directory of civic tech projects and resources.

National Democratic Institute (NDI): Provides resources and support for civic tech initiatives.



Open Government Partnership (OGP): A global initiative promoting open government.

Code for America: A network of civic technologists working on government solutions.

By utilizing these civic tech tools and resources, citizens can become more informed, engaged, and empowered to participate in shaping their communities and governments.

THE INTERSECTION BETWEEN FACT-CHECKING AND AU DATA POLICY AND ALIGNMENT TO AGENDA 2063

The intersection of fact-checking and the African Union (AU) Data Policy Framework lies in ensuring the responsible and ethical use of data, which is crucial for combating disinformation and promoting a trustworthy digital environment, especially in the context of elections and public discourse.

AGENDA 2063:

Agenda 2063 is the African Union's (AU) strategic framework for the socio-economic transformation of the continent over the next 50 years.

It aims to achieve "An integrated, prosperous, and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the international arena."

Achieving this vision relies heavily on accurate data and informed decision-making.

AU Data Policy:

The AU Data Policy Framework is designed to create a harmonised data environment across the continent.

It focuses on:

Enabling the free and secure flow of data.

Safeguarding human rights and ensuring data protection.

Promoting equitable access to data.

Supporting data-driven policy-making and innovation.

This policy recognises that data is a strategic asset for Africa's development.

The Role of Fact-Checking:

Ensuring Data Accuracy:

Fact-checking is vital for verifying the accuracy of data used in policy formulation and implementation related to Agenda 2063.

It helps to combat the spread of misinformation and disinformation, which can undermine development efforts.

Promoting transparency and accountability:

By verifying information, fact-checking enhances transparency and accountability in governance.

This is essential for building trust and ensuring that Agenda 2063 goals are

achieved.

Supporting informed decision-making:

Accurate information is crucial for informed decision-making at all levels, from governments to citizens.

Fact-checking helps to ensure that decisions related to Agenda 2063 are based on reliable data.

Strengthening democratic processes:

Access to verified information strengthens democratic processes, enabling citizens to hold their governments accountable.

This is fundamental for the good governance aspirations of Agenda 2063.

Relevance to Agenda 2063:

Accurate data is essential for monitoring progress towards Agenda 2063 goals.

Fact-checking helps to ensure that progress reports and evaluations are based on reliable information.

The AU Data Policy Framework provides a foundation for responsible data management, which is crucial for achieving the aspirations of Agenda 2063.

Essentially, the ability of the AU to have correct data and for the member states to be able to trust the data that is being used is essential for the implementation and tracking of the success of Agenda 2063.

In a world where information spreads rapidly, the ability to verify that information is essential.

MAXIMIZING CIVIC TECH AND FACT-CHECKING TOOL EFFICIENCY

Civic tech and fact-checking tools can be powerful assets for promoting transparency, accountability, and informed decision-making. Here are some tips and tricks to maximise their efficiency:

1. Understand Your Goals:

Define Objectives: Clearly articulate what you want to achieve with these tools. Are you aiming to increase transparency, improve accountability, or enhance civic engagement?

Identify Target Audience: Determine who will benefit most from the tools and tailor your approach accordingly.

2. Choose the Right Tools:

Research Options: Explore a variety of tools and platforms to find the best fit for your needs. Consider factors like functionality, ease of use, and cost.

Consider Customisation: Look for tools that can be customized to meet your specific requirements.

3. Train and educate users:

Provide Training: Offer training sessions or resources to help users understand how to effectively use the tools.

Encourage Engagement: Promote the use of the tools through social media, newsletters, or other communication channels.

4. Leverage data effectively:

Collect and analyse Data: Collect relevant data and analyze it to identify trends, patterns, and insights.

Visualise Data: Use visualisations like charts and graphs to make data more accessible and understandable.

5. Collaborate with Partners:

Build Partnerships: Collaborate with other organizations or individuals who have complementary skills or resources.

Share Best Practices: Exchange knowledge and best practices to improve the effectiveness of your efforts.

6. Continuously Evaluate and Improve:

Monitor Performance: Regularly assess the impact of the tools and identify areas for improvement.

Iterate and Adapt: Be willing to make changes and adapt your approach based on feedback and results.

7. Address challenges and limitations:

Identify Challenges: Be aware of potential challenges and limitations, such as technical difficulties or resistance from stakeholders.

Develop Strategies: Develop strategies to overcome these challenges and ensure the long-term sustainability of your efforts.

IV. POLITICAL AND ELECTION MISINFORMATION



Political disinformation is the intentional use of misleading information against political candidates, parties, processes, and campaigns with the aim of gaining political advantage. Electoral disinformation (also called election disinformation) is the deliberate distribution of false information about electoral processes such as voting, civic education, political candidates and parties, electoral bodies, the judiciary, the executive and the police, and military forces and their role in the electoral cycle.

What does political and election disinformation look like?

Propaganda against political candidates and independent institutions
Competing political interests are a breeding ground for propaganda and smear campaigns. These are often designed to discredit political opponents by branding them as corrupt (without any evidence), anti-religious, or any other label that will paint them as unsuitable for election. This also includes fake allegations about manifestos.



During elections, there is usually a concerted effort to discredit independent institutions such as the Electoral Commissions (ECs), the justice system, and security forces with the aim of portraying their leadership as partisan and/or compromised. However, there might be some instances where these institutions show signs of bias.

Negative ethnic stereotyping/regional.

Negative ethnic stereotyping uses coded words and ethnic stereotypes to build on misinformation and disinformation targeting ethnic communities.

Negative ethnic stereotyping capitalises on the weaponization of preference for certain cultural practices.

Why and how does political and election disinformation spread?

Depending on who is running for elective office and which party is sponsoring them, the stakes are often high. At the core of the scramble for power and high office are money and influence. Political disinformation and election disinformation actors use the same tactics and techniques. These include:

Doctored newspaper front pages.

False information shows up in the form of doctored front pages of leading newspapers with sensational headlines and images of prominent individuals.

Fake digital cards/news alerts

Digital cards and news alerts are graphic images used by news publications to disseminate news highlights to their audiences. Fabricated digital cards that imitate media branding have been used to disseminate falsehoods, sometimes quoting public figures, other times spreading propaganda, inciting ethnic division, or potentially polarising citizens and edging them towards violence.

Fabricated screenshots of news stories.

Another way in which political false information is shared is through fabricated or doctored screenshots that are made to look like they were taken from websites of legitimate news organisations. While the stories have no basis in fact, the fact that they seem to have been published by legitimate sources contributes to their believability and therefore virality.

Many charts and graphs on social media are designed to appear like results of polls conducted by legitimate survey companies and seek to shape the online discussion about the supposed ranking of political candidates. Polling organisations routinely have to disown posts attributed to them.

Recycled false information

Certain pieces of false information resurface during every election cycle. Some of this false information has previously been debunked, and a simple search would show debunks that have been done by various fact-checking organisations.



Spreading unverified election results

Some political candidates and other independent actors take advantage of the public thirst for information and set up parallel tallying centres from where they publish fabricated or misleading results, declaring a win ahead of the official declaration of results by the electoral commission. Some candidates use this as a strategy to lay grounds for rejecting election results.

Fake affidavits

Election disputes are a breeding ground for false information. One of the most prominent forms is the swearing of affidavits by politicians using false information. Even if the politician retracts or withdraws the affidavit during the actual petition hearing, the media will have published the contents of the false affidavits, spreading damaging narratives that affect the credibility of the election.

Bot accounts and keyboard warriors

Bad actors use bot accounts and keyboard warriors to amplify disinformation. The content is pushed and amplified in an artificial way to reach a wide audience and to make the disinformation content easily believable rather than allowing it to spread organically through normal sharing on social media.

Electoral opinion polls

Opinion polls are popular tools for gauging public sentiment about specific topics and candidates. They are used by political parties, media, and independent organisations alike. They can be useful for helping to build consensus and understanding what the public cares about. They can also be misused to reaffirm political power and to gain an advantage over rivals.

Why does fact-checking political & election misinformation matter?

Fact-checking political and election misinformation is crucial for maintaining a healthy and functioning democracy. Here's why:

Protecting the Integrity of Elections:

Misinformation can directly influence voter behaviour, potentially swaying election results based on false premises.

False claims about voter fraud or manipulated results can erode public trust in the electoral process, leading to instability.

Ensuring Informed Decision-Making:

Voters need accurate information to make informed decisions about candidates and policies.

Misinformation can distort public perception, leading to choices based on falsehoods rather than facts.

Holding Politicians Accountable:

Fact-checking holds political figures accountable for their statements, discouraging the spread of false or misleading information. It helps to create a culture of truthfulness in political discourse.

Combating Polarization:

Misinformation often fuels political polarization by reinforcing existing biases and creating false narratives about opposing viewpoints.

Fact-checking can help to counter these divisive forces by promoting a shared understanding of reality.

Preserving Public Trust:

The spread of misinformation can erode public trust in institutions, including the media, government, and electoral systems.

Fact-checking helps to restore and maintain that trust by providing reliable information.

Safeguarding against manipulation:

Foreign and domestic actors can use misinformation to manipulate public opinion and influence election results. Fact-checking helps to defend against these attacks on democracy.

V. AU DATA POLICY IN AFRICA



UNDERSTANDING THE AU DATA POLICY FRAMEWORK

What is the AU Data Policy Framework? The African Union's (AU) Data Policy Framework is a comprehensive set of guidelines designed to harness the power of data for Africa's development. It aims to create a safe, secure, and ethical digital environment that promotes innovation, economic growth, and social progress.

Key Principles of the Framework:

Data Sovereignty: African countries should have control over their data resources and how they are used.

Data Privacy: Individuals' personal data should be protected and used responsibly.

Data Security: Robust measures should be in place to safeguard data from cyber threats.

Data Accessibility: Data should be accessible to all, including governments,

TOOLKIT COMPONENTS



businesses, and citizens.

Data Ethics: Data should be used ethically and responsibly, avoiding bias and discrimination.

1. DATA GOVERNANCE

Establishing a Data Governance Framework:

Develop clear data policies and procedures.

Assign roles and responsibilities for data management.

Implement data quality standards.

Data Ownership and Access:

Define who owns data and who has access to it.

Implement data sharing protocols.

Data Retention and Disposal:

Establish guidelines for data retention periods.



Develop secure data disposal procedures.



2. DATA PRIVACY AND SECURITY

Data Protection Laws:

Understand relevant data protection laws and regulations.

Implement data protection measures, such as encryption and access controls.

Data Breach Response:

Develop a data breach response plan.

Conduct regular security audits and vulnerability assessments.



3. DATA ETHICS

Ethical Data Use:

Ensure data is used for legitimate purposes.

Avoid bias and discrimination in data analysis and decision-making.

Data Transparency:

Be transparent about data collection, storage, and usage.

Provide clear information to data subjects.



4. DATA SHARING AND INTEROPERABILITY

Data Standards:

Adhere to international data standards.

Develop national data standards.

Data Sharing Agreements:

Negotiate data sharing agreements that protect privacy and security.

Data Interoperability:

Ensure data can be easily shared and integrated across different systems.

5. CAPACITY BUILDING

Data Literacy:

Train individuals and organizations on data literacy and digital skills.

Promote data-driven decision-making.

Data Science and Analytics:

Invest in data science and analytics capabilities.

Encourage research and innovation in data-related fields.

Ensure data can be easily shared and integrated across different systems.

Additional Resources:



African Union Data
Policy Framework



African Union
Commission



International
Organizations
(e.g., ITU, UN)

VI. TRAINING MATERIALS

PRESENTATION SLIDES ON FACT-CHECKING



01

Introduction
to Election
Fact-Checking

02

Research and
verification
skills

03

Tools and
Techniques for
Journalists

04

Writing
Fact-Check
Reports

05

Ethical
Considerations

06

Fact-Checking
in the African
Context

07

Introduction to
the AU Data
Policy Framework

08

Implementation
and practical use
of the AU Data
Policy Framework

VII. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



GLOSSARY OF FACT-CHECKING TERMS:

General Fact-Checking:

- » Misinformation
- » Disinformation
- » Malinformation
- » Propaganda
- » Clickbait
- » Deepfakes

- » Fact-checking
- » Fact-checking methodologies
- » Fact-checking formats (full fact-checks, short fact-checks, explainers)
- » Ethical considerations in fact-checking
- » Handling difficult sources and information
- » Political and election misinformation:
- » Political disinformation
- » Electoral disinformation
- » Propaganda

- » Negative ethnic stereotyping
- » Doctored media (newspaper front pages, digital cards, news alerts, screenshots)
- » Ghost polls
- » Recycled false information
- » Spreading unverified election results
- » Fake affidavits
- » Bot accounts and keyboard warriors
- » Electoral opinion polls

- » Additional Keywords:
- » Civic Tech Tools
- » Social media listening tools
- » Open-source data platforms
- » Image and video verification tools
- » Fact-checking platforms and databases
- » Transparency
- » Accountability
- » Informed decision-making

VIII. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)



1. FACT-CHECKING FUNDAMENTALS

What is information disorder? (Misinformation, disinformation, propaganda, clickbait, deepfakes)

What factors contribute to information disorder? (Social media, algorithms, media literacy, political polarization)

How can we address information disorder? (Media literacy education, fact-checking organizations, platform accountability, government policies)

What are the fundamental principles of fact-checking? (Verify the source, check for corroboration, be skeptical of sensational claims, beware of bias, use fact-checking tools, consider context, be patient and thorough.)

What is the fact-checking process? (Identify the claim, assess the source, gather evidence, analyze the evidence, evaluate the claim, consider alternative explanations, draw conclusions, and document your findings.)



What are the different fact-checking formats? (Full fact-checks, short fact-checks, explainers)

2. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN FACT-CHECKING

What are the key ethical considerations in fact-checking? (Objectivity and neutrality, transparency and accountability, respect for privacy, fairness to sources, avoiding misinformation, respecting intellectual property, avoiding misleading claims)

How can we handle difficult sources and information? (bias, misinformation, complexity, language) - Strategies include critical thinking, fact-checking, contextualisation, and seeking expertise.

3. POLITICAL AND ELECTION MISINFORMATION

What is political and election disinformation?

What does political and election disinformation look like? (Propaganda, negative stereotyping, doctored media, ghost polls, recycled information, fake results, fake affidavits, bot accounts)

Why and how does political and election disinformation spread?

Why does fact-checking political and election disinformation matter?

4. CIVIC TECH TOOLS AND RESOURCES

This section provides a curated list of civic tech tools (social media listening, open-source data platforms, image/video verification tools, fact-checking platforms) with guides on how to use them effectively.

5. MAXIMIZING CIVIC TECH AND FACT-CHECKING TOOL EFFICIENCY

This section offers tips on using civic tech and fact-checking tools effectively, including understanding your goals, choosing the right tools, training users, leveraging data, collaborating with partners, and continuous evaluation.

IX. CONTACT INFORMATION

Information on how to get support and additional
resources

CONTACT US





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Jibi Korsuk Moses is the Associate Editor at 211 Check, a vital platform in South Sudan dedicated to fact-checking and verification, working to combat misinformation and hate speech. He advocates for truth and operates at the forefront of information integrity, working with Defyhatenow as a fellow, specialising in fact-checking and digital rights. Mr. Moses holds a bachelor's degree in public administration and an advanced certificate in public health.

His career showcases varied experience, including as Programs Manager at Junub Youth Action Network. His social media monitoring work contributes to spotting and counteracting misinformation, hate speech, and cyber threats.

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B. Maurice Thantan

Maurice Thantan, a digital journalist and web professional from Benin, has over a decade of experience in media, specialising in digital innovation, governance, and culture.

He plays crucial roles at the Benin Broadcasting and Television Office (ORTB), the nation's public service audiovisual media outlet, overseeing its digital content and spearheading numerous digital discourse projects, focusing on principles of open government, and fostering digital literacy within Francophone West Africa. Maurice founded the Association of Bloggers of Benin (AB-Benin), underscoring his commitment to civic tech, open data, and citizen participation.

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