



United Nations in South Africa Concept Note

Media Training Workshop

Theme: Misinformation, Disinformation and Discrimination in the Media
Sandton, 21 September 2022

Background

1. The outbreak of COVID-19 created not only a health crisis but a fertile ground for misinformation and disinformation in South Africa and around the world. In addition to the pandemic, migration issues in this country have also generated hate, stigma and discrimination at alarmingly high levels. As global economies come under strain from the pandemic, unemployment has risen and inequalities widened, throwing millions into poverty, leaving nationals and foreign migrants competing for scarce resources.
2. Historically, there has always been misinformation directed at different targets in one form or the other. But the Covid-19 pandemic witnessed an unprecedented high level of misinformation and disinformation in the media (both traditional and social media) and in other platforms. In South Africa, incidents of hate speech, stigma, discrimination and xenophobia have metamorphosed into infodemics, i.e. “an overabundance of information—some accurate and some not—that makes it hard for people to find trustworthy sources and reliable guidance when they need it.”
3. The danger of infodemics is that it puts people’s lives at risk. Whole groups of people are stigmatized and discriminated against. Migrants and refugees are among those who have been falsely blamed and vilified for societal ills such as crime and unemployment.
4. To this end, at the height of the pandemic, the United Nations launched various initiatives to counter the negative effects of infodemics around the world, starting with the Verified and the Pause campaigns. The Verified campaign aimed to help curb the spread of inaccurate information about COVID-19 on social media by creating a cadre of “digital first responders to increase the volume and reach of trusted, accurate information on the pandemic.” Under the Verified campaign, information will be provided around three themes: *science* – to save lives; *solidarity* – to promote local and global cooperation; and *solutions* – to advocate for support for populations that have been impacted by COVID-19.
5. Many social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Google (YouTube) and TikTok, have committed to promote the Pause campaign and to speed up efforts to halt the spread of

misinformation. In addition, several large media companies around the world, including Al Jazeera, Deutsche Welle, Euronews, France Medias Monde, MultiChoice Africa and StarTimes, distributed Pause content on TV channels, online and via text messages to stop the viral spread of inaccurate information. In South Africa, some media outlets and non-profit organizations such as Media Monitoring Africa and Africa Check have become vocal voices in the fight against misinformation and disinformation.

6. To this end, the United Nations in South Africa is partnering with the South African National Editors' Forum (SANEF) in organizing a **media training workshop on *Misinformation, Disinformation and Discrimination in the Media* on Wednesday, 21 September 2022.**

Objectives

7. The objectives of the media training workshop are:
 - a. To empower the media with the tools they need to be more vigilant in their reporting and verify information from credible sources to avoid spreading, avertedly or inadvertently, misinformation and disinformation.
 - b. To encourage a partnership in which media play an active role in urging the public to be more discernible in sharing information particularly through social media.
 - c. To seek enhanced collaboration with the United Nations and the media in the campaign against misinformation, disinformation, stigma and discrimination.

Outcomes

8. At the end of the workshop participants will be equipped to be vigilant and to verify information before they publish or report it.

Format

9. The workshop will be conducted by a professional facilitator. It will open with a panel discussion on the theme by experts on fact-checking, misinformation, disinformation and discrimination in the media. This will be followed a step-by-step guidance by the facilitator on issues that include fact vs opinion, bias in reporting, and verification of information.

Facilitator

Matuba Mahlatjie, Communications Director (Africa), Power For All

Panelists

William Bird, Director, Media Monitoring Africa and & Africa Check

Workshop on Misinformation and Disinformation Programme 21 September 2022
9:00 Welcome Remarks, Masimba Tafirenyika, UNIC Director
9:05 Introductory remarks, Reggy Moalusi, Executive Director, SANEF
9:05 Introduction of participants
9:10 Panel Discussion: The high price of misinformation and disinformation: William Bird, Africa Fact Check, Amabhungane

10:15 Tea break

10:30 The importance of accurate reporting in digital age
10:40 How and why false information spreads
10:50 Fact-checking and why facts matter
11:05 Facts versus opinion-what can be fact checked
11:20 The impact of bias
11:30 How does bias influence the stories we tell and share
11:45 Exercise

12:45 Lunch

13:45 Exercise
14:00 Fact Checking Political Statement
14:30 Fact Checking information on social media and the five-step fact checking process
15:00 Post workshop evaluation and close

15:00 Close