



IEC UNDP STRATEGIES FOR COMBATTING DISINFORMATION

COMBATING
DISINFORMATION: A
DEMOCRATIC
PARTNERSHIP

WHO MMA IS



Established in 1993

**Monitored > 300 projects
focusing on human rights issues**



**OUR VISION:
A responsible and quality
media**



**Holds the
powerful to
account**



**Enables an active
and engaged
citizenry**

STARTERS - & TAKEAWAYS

- ▶ An important video to start
- ▶ First 6 WEEKS of 2020
Americans were. Exposed to
2.4 BILLION adverts on the
Presidential Campaign, on
Facebook ALONE
- ▶ The Guardian
<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/feb/21/mike-bloomberg-facebook-ad-campaign>

STARTERS - & TAKEAWAYS

- ▶ Trust and credibility still matter - in fact more than ever before our media and journalism matters, and credible democratic institutions matter.
- ▶ Disinformation doesn't mean all social media are bad. It has facilitated it and presents new platforms for it but social media also offers one of the greatest potential growth areas for EMB's
- ▶ So: "If you don't like change, you're going to like irrelevance even less." General Shinseki, Former Chief of Staff US Army
- ▶ A fundamental element of how we combat disinformation is through partnerships and collaboration

THE DARK FORCES ARE STRONG

- ▶ Disinformation presents fundamental threat to free, fair credible elections
- ▶ Can be driven by political parties, rogue elements, factions, outside/foreign entities, big business, fanatics and fruitcakes
- ▶ It is shifting and like a virus is able to mutate - deep fakes will be common reality in 2021, more providers will offer disinformation services with better bots.
- ▶ We are likely to always be at least two steps behind in our fight against it
- ▶ It plays on peoples fears, and emotions and existing ideas and biases
- ▶ To counter it we have till recently few entities. The media - being actively destabilized with models that are failing and often existing enemy of governments. Civil society and to some degree the platforms.

TRUST & CREDIBILITY STILL COUNT

- ▶ Two approaches here: 1. You actually want a democracy. 2. You don't. If you don't, and are just pretending, you really shouldn't be here. Because in all likely hold you are part of the problem helping to undermine not just democracy but peoples fundamental right to choose.
- ▶ Knowing what's up and what's down, the ability, indeed the basic right of freedom of choice underpins the basis for democracy. That people can freely choose how to govern themselves. Disinformation seeks to destroy this. Given what we know if comes down then to ensuring people still have the right to choose and to do so - they must be able to choose based on credible information.
- ▶ Media, and journalism in particular currently our core means of conveying this, of sifting of checking, of validating and offering diverse views and perspectives.

CHANGE IS COMING READY OR NOT

- ▶ Our emerging digital reality means and the so called 4IR means disruption and uncertainty - two things that are not good for running smooth elections
- ▶ We have one of the most effective EMB's globally, they are slick and efficient they have systems and can deal with crises as they emerge. But even they can be caught off guard by digital disruption.
- ▶ Point is it isn't just a new tag on to your existing systems but a whole new approach that is required to combat disinformation To data, to media, to journalism and to social media.

PARTNERSHIPS ACROSS THE SPECTRUM

- ▶ Core existing challenge is that playing field is not level - media have to abide by all sorts in election period but not social media
- ▶ Far too often discourse seems to suggest that it is a problem for the platforms to resolve - it is but not on their own
- ▶ Or we say government must regulate - but that creates problems of a whole new variety.
- ▶ Both these lead to problems.

A WAY FORWARD

- ▶ We have to work to strengths of democracy, diverse media, social media, journalism and civil society.
- ▶ Need to make it make sense to the public, to voters, to empower them to engage, to voice and to complain.
- ▶ We need to make the opaque clear
- ▶ Skills come from multiplicity of places, academics, local and global - these aren't skills EMB's should or usually do have.
- ▶ There are a number of ways of partnering.
- ▶ In 2019 we worked with our EMB the IEC as well as Media partners on a few initiatives

WHAT DID WE DO

- ▶ **Partnership** with EMB, media and others
- ▶ The **Digital Disinformation Complaints** process
- ▶ A **Draft Code** for use in elections period was **developed**
- ▶ The **Real411 information and reporting platform**
- ▶ The **Real411 communications** programme
- ▶ The **political advert repository (PAdRe)**
 - ▶ Loads of other cool stuff including: Portal for journalists, Media Monitoring and **digital literacy tools** like RoveR



THE 2019 **SOUTH AFRICAN**
NATIONAL & PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS



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[JOURNALIST HARRASMENT](#)

[ABOUT REAL411](#)

[MEDIA](#)



DISINFORMATION
DESTROYS DEMOCRACY

REPORT > REVIEW > RESULT

- 1.** Submit complaint via Real411 website
- 2.** IEC's Directorate for Electoral Offenses reviews with experts
- 3.** Reviews based on guidelines and make recommendations to Electoral Commissioners
- 4.** Electoral Commissioners make ruling on the complaint
- 5.** Decision is communicated
- 6.** Anyone unhappy with the decision can approach the Electoral Court for relief



HATE SPEECH DEHUMANIZES PEOPLE

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INCITEMENT TO VIOLENCE
GIVES RISE TO CRIME

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DISINFORMATION
DESTROYS DEMOCRACY

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HARASSMENT OF JOURNALISTS
DISMANTLES OUR FREEDOM

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WHAT CAN EMB'S DO? PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS...

Fighting disinformation is like building a good marriage!

- ▶ **Communicate communicate communicate.**
- ▶ Realise that this will mean **significant** shift required for Comms people. They have always been key, and worked stupid hours, now their job is even more critical. They need real budget and resources and appropriate delegated authority.
- ▶ If you don't have budget you need friends or partners who have them who can offer dedicated support, even if for limited periods
- ▶ Get on top of **party political advertising**, follow the money... expose who is paying.

WHAT CAN EMB'S DO? MORE

PRACTICAL STUFF..

Take control of your area, but trust the process, its too easy to want to control everything, but a lesson of digital is that one reason we are in this mess around disinformation is because entities seek to control, the media, the internet etc.

- ▶ **Work with credible entities**, civil society and media, academics, government and the platforms. Each bring and offer skills and expertise you don't have.
- ▶ It means actively supporting media freedom, condemning attacks on media, calling out misogyny, demanding greater transparency from platforms, support digital literacy initiatives, and those to combat disinformation!
- ▶ Innovate Escalate Collaborate

CONCLUSIONS...

- ▶ We are already playing catch up: The big changes we see now as necessary are the beginning of a new phase of threats to our democracy,
- ▶ Our electoral systems will have to change dramatically to meet the new challenges
- ▶ Technology has huge potential but has also facilitated great and emerging threats. **We can make it work but only if we are deliberate about it**
- ▶ We will need all pillars of democracy to play their part, state has to update and communicate systems, private have to be more open and responsive to our democracies, public have to be alert and enabled; media have to keep going

MORE CONCLUSIONS...

- ▶ Role of media increasingly important - no longer just about informing voters and reporting fairly, they are central to reality war going on and are fundamental pillar of democracy,
- ▶ Media will need to offer real meaning and relationships with their audiences.
- ▶ Media will need to help facilitate and drive conversations, and ensure more explanation

THANKS, QUESTIONS?

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Media Matters

MEDIA
MONITORING
AFRICA

ROVER: MOBILE APP

**HELPING PEOPLE SPOT REAL OVER
RUBBISH NEWS**



BUILDING DIGITAL & CRITICAL MEDIA LITERACY WITH ROVER

- ▶ Build your own digital and media literacy skills
- ▶ Test how good you are at posting real over rubbish news content
- ▶ Check if articles are real
- ▶ Rate news articles!
- ▶ New feature coming..

<https://rover.directory>

KNOWNEWS

CHROME AND FIREFOX EXTENSIONS TO HELP IDENTIFY DODGY NEWS SITES



Shows you which sites are dodgy and which are credible in an easy colour-coded system



<https://newstools.co.za/page/knownews>

POLITICAL ADVERT REPOSITORY

SYSTEM PROMOTING TRANSPARENCY IN POLITICAL ADVERTS



Helping us identify which political adverts are
legit or not

WWW.PADRE.ORG.Z

[A](http://WWW.PADRE.ORG.Z)

MEDIA CONTEXT AS IT IS

- ▶ Explosion of information making it increasingly difficult to know what is real and what isn't and emergence of new power dynamics, altering way we operate
- ▶ Public overwhelmed, or living in bubbles, echo chambers
- ▶ Declining number of journalists, increasing number of PR practitioners, fewer resources, less expertise
- ▶ Crisis of trust and credibility of media and journalism and public backlash
- ▶ Failing business models of media, declining public media/under threat
- ▶ Journalists attacked online (gendered), modern censorship, bots and trolls!
- ▶ Rise of mis and disinformation - spreading false information with intent to cause public harm/undermine elections

A VIDEO!



Type to enter a caption.