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GUIDELINES ON **Fact-Checking** **Electoral** **Misinformation** **& Disinformation**

Implemented by the International Press Centre (IPC) under component 4- Support to media of the European Union Support to Democratic Governance – Phase II (EU-SDGN II) Programme

Introduction

False information, otherwise known as fake news, has been identified as capable of undermining the integrity of the electoral system in Nigeria. Research has shown the impact of false information on the election cycle, whether it is general or runoff elections.

The indelible mark of false information on past elections in the country calls for action by media practitioners and citizens on how to mitigate the dangers. To do this, it is pertinent to know how it creeps into narratives. The fact that false claims can be presented as gospel truth in the blink of an eye cannot be overestimated.

This guideline by International Press Centre's [Nigerian Democratic Report](#) aims to serve as an armour against the assault of false information on the country's democracy. It adopts a holistic approach to enhancing the integrity of electoral information, highlighting how fact-checking could mitigate the fierce, easy penetration of misleading and false information.

WHY Fact-Checking is important during electioneering

- **Fast-Paced Information and Technology aid spread of false information:** Fast-paced digital technology is catalysing the spread of information across the global place. As such, unverified and misleading political information has a quick tendency to penetrate the media space, including social media platforms like WhatsApp. The impact of artificial intelligence has also created a dominating factor for the virality of information, whether true or untrue.

⚡ Rapid Spread of False Information

Digital technology & social media (e.g., WhatsApp, X) amplify unverified political content

AI tools accelerate the virality of both true and false information

⚠ Dangers to the Electoral Process

Fake news, propaganda, and manipulated media (videos, images, AI-generated content) threaten democracy

Used for political manipulation and inciting violence

🧠 Distorted Decision-Making

Misinformation influences voter choices, erodes public trust, and fuels political polarization

Encourages rumours, conspiracy theories, and weakens credible journalism

🛡 The Antidote: Media & Information Literacy

Defined by UNESCO as the ability to access, evaluate, and use information wisely

Builds critical thinking to identify false

- **False Information poses danger to the electoral process:** Misleading electoral information, political propaganda, half-truths, hoaxes, satirical falsehoods, misleading context, fabricated content, and manipulated content (videos, images, and AI content) pose great danger to society, thereby creating adverse effects. Furthermore, fake news is used for political manipulation and inciting violence in the country.
- **Misinformation manipulates and distorts citizens' decision-making during elections:** [Research](#) has shown that fake news and misinformation have a significant impact on political reality, civic engagement, and the electioneering system in Nigeria. They have been identified as hindrances to informed decision-making, fuel political polarisation, and erode public trust in institutions. These issues also contribute to the spread of rumours and conspiracy theories, undermining the credibility of accurate news sources.

MISINFORMATION VS. DISINFORMATION



MISINFORMATION



False or misleading information shared without intent to deceive

DISINFORMATION



False information deliberately created to deceive or manipulate

WHY KNOWLEDGE MATTERS



- Knowing the difference helps identify reliable sources
- Prevents sharing harmful or manipulative content



REAL-WORLD IMPACT

- Fuels hate speech and discrimination (sinophobia, xenophobia, transphobia)
- Encourages violence, corruption, manipulation, and erosion of rights
- Normalises dangerous rhetoric and influences public behaviour

Media and Information Literacy as antidote

Media and information literacy have been identified as a strong antidote to combat false information. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation ([UNESCO](#)), media and information literacy (MIL) is a basis for enhancing access to information and describes skills and attitudes that are needed to effectively engage with information and information providers, including those on the Internet.

Simply put, media and information literacy

serves as a shield for all and sundry against the pervasive tendency of misinformation and disinformation during political seasons. It is expected of the relevant stakeholders in the electioneering process to be familiar with media literacy by knowing how false information operates and how to mitigate it.

What is Misinformation and Disinformation?

Misinformation is inaccurate or misleading information that is not spread with the intent to deceive. On the other hand, **disinformation** is false information that is deliberately spread to deceive people and obscure the truth.

Knowing the differences between types of false information helps you decide what to share and identify reliable sources.

Disinformation and misinformation have contributed to the rise of sinophobia, xenophobia, transphobia, increased public support for restrictions on bodily autonomy, military coups, as well as hidden corruption and exploitation. The widespread dissemination and acceptance of misinformation, particularly in the form of targeted campaigns, can contribute to the normalisation of certain types of rhetoric and may influence interpersonal or systemic behaviours.

Types of misinformation and disinformation

- Fabricated Content: entirely false information.
- Manipulated Content: original material that has been altered or modified from its initial form.
- Satire and parody: humorous but false stories presented as real, without intent to harm, though readers may be misled.
- Imposter Content: material that mimics genuine, trusted sources.
- Misleading Content: material that conveys inaccurate or deceptive information.
- False Connections: headlines, photos, or captions that don't match the content.
- False Context: pairing true content with incorrect context.
- Propaganda refers to information that is presented in a biased or misleading manner with the intention of advancing or promoting a specific political cause or perspective.



Fabricated Content

entirely false information shared without intent to deceive



Manipulated Content

original material that has been altered or modified from its initial form



Satire and parody

humorous but false stories presented as real, without intent to harm, though readers may be misled



Imposter Content

material that mimics genuine, trusted sources



Misleading Content

material that conveys inaccurate or deceptive information



Propaganda

refers to information that is presented in a biased or misleading manner with the intention of advancing or promoting a specific political cause

Where to spot Political Information for Verification

Political contents circulate widely and spread like wildfire across both mainstream and unconventional platforms. The burden of identification and verification therefore not only lies in the hands of Fact-Checkers, but also the general public.



Examples of NDR fact-checked politically misleading information

category	Source Intent	Example
Social Media Posts	False claims spread through Facebook, X (Twitter), WhatsApp, TikTok, etc.	<i>Governor Alia of Benue state has at statues of himself in the de.</i> See NDR
Political Figures & Spokespersons	Sometimes twist fact for political gain.	<i>There is no single Obedient supporter In Ebonyi State again, we will not be deceived again because the last election was mistake</i> See NDR
Fake News Websites / Blogs	Created to mislead or earn ad money.	<i>An online news website has claimed that the impeached speaker of the Lagos State House of Assembly, Mr. Mudashiru Obasa, is the longest serving speaker.</i> See NDR
Foreign or Domestic Propaganda Groups	Spread disinformation for influence or manipulation.	Statebacked fake accounts during elections
Misinterpreted Data or Reports	Wrong conclusions from statistics or leaked documents.	<i>The country's debt-to-GDP ratio remains within the range of 40 to 45 per cent...moderate when compared to South Africa's 70 per cent and Ghana's figure of over 90 per cent.</i> See NDR
AI-generated or Doctored Media	Deepfakes, edited photos, or AI text that looks real.	<i>"The viral image claiming Peter Obi visited MC Oluomo after his NURTW inauguration" – but it's a deepfake.</i> See NDR
Ordinary Individuals	People who share false content unintentionally.	<i>An X user claimed that Nigerians earning #800,000 and above annually will be at tax 11% to 20% from January 2026.</i> See NDR

HOW to Spotlight Political Information for Verification

a. Identify High-Engagement or Sensational Content
Viral posts, especially political ones, are often false before they're verified. Be cautious of content that gets rapid engagement and shares.

b. To get Verifiable Claims, ask questions:

- Does the post contain a factual statement that is verifiable, such as “The government has increased the fuel subsidy”?
- Is it a statement of opinion (such as “This administration is the worst ever”) that does not require verification?

c. Flag Content with Potential Public Impact

- Prioritise claims regarding elections, policies, corruption, security, or ethnic tensions due to their likely significant impact.

d. Monitor Politicians and Official Handles

- Track verified accounts of politicians, political influencers, government agencies, and parties.
- Archive posts, as some may later be deleted or edited.

e. Pay Attention to Media Manipulation

- Watch out for old videos recirculating as new, deepfakes, doctored photos, AI-generated videos, hoaxes, or misleading captions.
- Reverse image search tools like Google Lens, InVID, or TinEye help confirm authenticity.



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Cross-Reference with Trusted Data



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What is

Fact-Checking?

Fact-checking is the process of verifying the accuracy of information, claims, or statements. It involves evaluating evidence, assessing sources, and using critical thinking to determine the validity of a claim. Fact-checking is vital in various fields, including journalism, academia, and decision-making, as it helps to ensure accuracy and credibility, prevent the spread of misinformation, support informed decision-making and foster critical thinking and media literacy.

Proper fact-checking doesn't just correct any possible errors; it also makes sure the content is of the highest quality. People will enjoy and trust the content more when they can be sure the facts that have been used are all accurate and reliable.



WHY FACT-CHECK?



1. PROTECTS DEMOCRACY

Fact-checking ensures that citizens make informed decisions based on truth, not manipulation. It guard against political misinformation and electoral deceit.



2. PREVENTS THE SPREAD OF FALSE INFORMATION

False news spreads faster than the truth ---fact-checking helps stop lies before they go viral.



3. PROMOTES CRITICAL THINKING

Encourages people to question sources, verify claims, and think independently, reducing blind trust in viral posts.



4. BUILDS PUBLIC TRUST

Accurate information strengthens confidence in media, governance, and civic institutions.

5. REDUCES HARM AND POLARISATION

Fact-checking dismantles propaganda, hate speech, and disinformation, helping to maintain peace and social

6. SUPPORTS ACCOUNTABILITY

Holds politicians, media, and influencers accountable for what they share with the public

How to Fact Check before sharing information:

- Pause before reacting to posts or messages that trigger strong emotions — false information often relies on this. If something seems unbelievable, verify its accuracy first.
- Check the source: Identify who made the statement, whether it's from a reputable outlet or an unknown social media account, and if there's a track record of misinformation. Look for the author's details, website, or contact information.
- Verify the Story Using Search Engines: Utilise Google or another reputable search engine by entering relevant keywords from the story, such as "Governor LAGBAJA has stepped down from contesting." If no credible news organisations are reporting on it, this may indicate the information is unreliable. Authentic news stories are typically covered by multiple established media outlets.
- Look at the Date and Context: Old news or recycled videos often reappear during elections. Sometimes people share a video from years ago and claim it's happening now.
- Check the date of the article or look for clues in the photo or video, banners, calendars, people's clothes, or background signs that can tell you when it was taken.
- Verify Photos and Videos: In the age of fake news, pictures can lie!. A single image can be taken out of context or edited. You can use tools like Google Reverse Image Search or TinEye to see where else that photo has appeared. If the same photo was used years ago for a different story, then it's fake or misleading.

1 PAUSE & REFLECT



Don't react immediately to posts that trigger strong emotions.



False info often rereplies on emotional reactions.

2 CHECK THE SOURCE



Who posted it? Reputable outlet or unknown social account?



Look for author details, website, or contact info.

3 VERIFY THE STORY USING SEARCH ENGINES



Governor LAGBAJA has stepped down from contesting.



If credible news outlets aren't reporting it → likely unreliable.

4 LOOK AT DATE & CONTEXT



Old news or recycled videos often resurface during elections.



Check article dates, aannet, calendars, clothing, or background signs.

5 VERIFY PHOTOS & VIDEOS



Images can be edited or taken out of context.



Use Google Reverse Image Search or Tincye.

6 READ BEYOND THE HEADLINE



Headlines can twist the truth.



Always read the full article before believing or sharing.

7 CHECK FACT-CHECKING PLATFORMS



Trusted fact-checking sites have already verified many stories.

8 ASK EXPERTS OR OFFICIAL SOURCES



For policies, elections, or government statements contact the official source v

- **Read Beyond the Headline:** Headlines are designed to grab attention. Sometimes, they twist the truth. Always open the link and read the full post before believing or sharing it. The real story might be completely different from the headline.
- **Check Verified Fact-Checking Sites:** Several organisations already do the work of verifying stories. Before you argue online or spread a post, check trusted fact-checking platforms.
- **Ask an Expert or Official Source:** If it's about a policy, election matters, or government statement, check the official page or contact the agency directly. Don't rely on “someone said...” when the person or office in charge can confirm it.

Sharing false information may mislead individuals, incite undue alarm, or contribute to harmful outcomes. Prior to forwarding or sharing content, it is advisable to verify its authenticity. If you are uncertain about the veracity of the information, refrain from disseminating it.

Ranking System used by the Nigerian Democratic Report @ www.ndr.org.ng

True: The claim is accurate in all or most respects, fully supported by evidence.

False: The claim is incorrect in major parts; evidence clearly contradicts it.

Misleading: Contains partial truth but is presented in a way that could mislead (omissions, exaggeration).

Unproven: Available evidence is unclear, conflicting, or insufficient.

Rating	Meaning	Explanation
True	Accurate	The claim is accurate in all or most respects and is fully supported by verifiable evidence.
False	Incorrect	The claim is wrong in major parts; available evidence clearly contradicts it.
Misleading	Partly True but Deceptive	The claim contains elements of truth but is presented in a way that could mislead—through omission, exaggeration, or misrepresentation.
Unproven	Inconclusive	Available evidence is unclear, conflicting, or insufficient to verify the claim.

Verification Tools for Fact-checking

- i. Google reverse image search:
Through Google reverse image search, one can get the idea of how long an image has been posted and other data like location and context. To use the Google reverse image, save your image, and visit www.google.com, click on the camera icon in the search bar to give you the option of uploading the image to be searched. You can also drag and drop the image into the search bar.
- ii. TinEye: This is another tool that can be used to verify images, just like the Google reverse image search. TinEye gives you the option of sorting your search results. The sorting can be done in "oldest" or "newest" to get an idea of when, where and in what context an image was uploaded on the internet. When you sort your results according to "most changed", you might discover that the image you are looking for has been manipulated.
- iii. Reverse image search: Use a screenshot or thumbnail from a video and do a reverse image search to find the video online.
- iv. Forensics is a web-based collection of tools that can be used for "digital image forensics." Some functionalities include magnifying functions, clone detection, error level analysis, noise analysis, level sweep, and many more.
- v. InVID is a free verification toolkit that assists in confirming the legitimacy of user-generated images and videos on social media by offering capabilities for metadata analysis, content prior

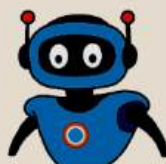


GOOGLE REVERSE IMAGE SEARCH

Through Google reverse image search, one can get the idea of how long an image has been posted and other data like location and context.

Google

To use the Google reverse image, save your image, and visit www.google.com, click on the camera icon in the search bar to give you the option of uploading the image to be searched. You can also drag and drop the image into the search bar.



TINEYE

This is another tool that can be used to verify images, just like the Google reverse image search.

Oldest Newest

TinEye gives you the option of sorting your search results. The sorting can be done in "oldest" or "newest" to get an idea of when, where and in what context an image was uploaded on the internet. When you sort your results according to "most changed", you might discover that the image you are looking for has been manipulated.



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INVID

A free verification toolkit that assists in confirming the legitimacy of user-generated images and videos on social media by offering capabilities for metadata analysis, content prior use detection, and possible manipulation detection. InVID's browser extensions are used by researchers, fact-checkers, and journalists.

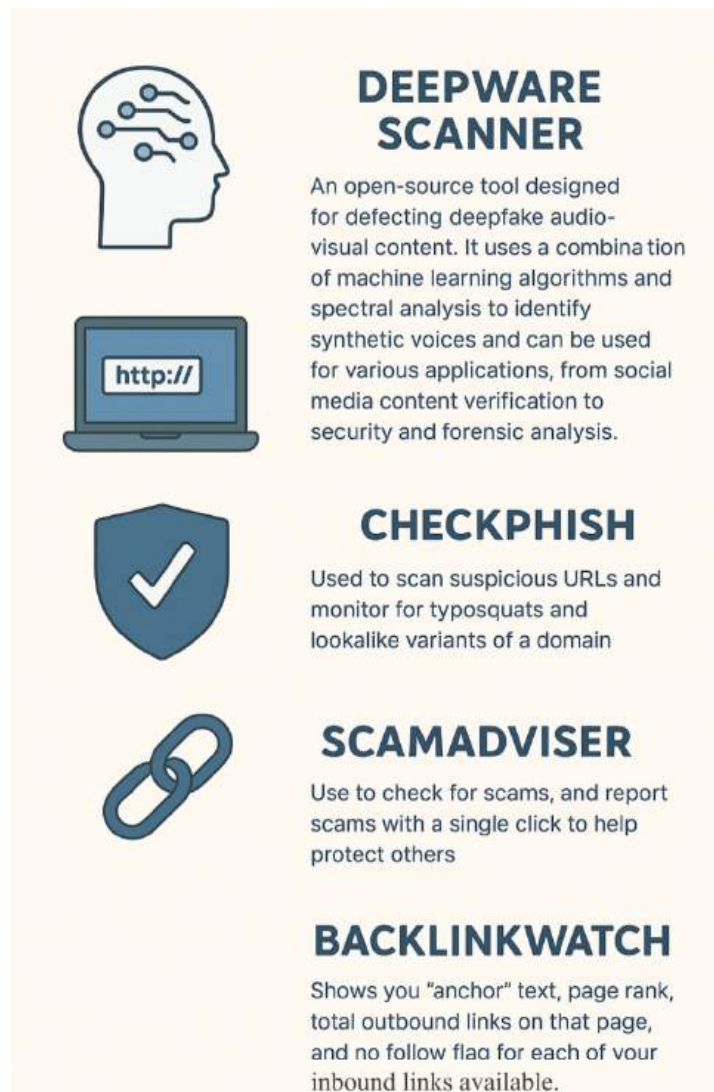
use detection, and possible manipulation detection. InVID's browser extensions are used by researchers, fact-checkers, and journalists.

vi. Deepware Scanner is an open-source tool designed for detecting deepfake audio-visual content. It uses a combination of machine learning algorithms and spectral analysis to identify synthetic voices and can be used for various applications, from social media content verification to security and forensic analysis. Though it works mostly for videos, it can be used to detect fake audio, too.

vii. Checkphish: used to scan suspicious URLs and monitor for typosquats and lookalike variants of a domain

viii. ScamAdviser: Use to check for scams, and report scams with a single click to help protect others

ix. Backlinkwatch: Shows you "anchor" text, page rank, total outbound links on that page, and no follow flag for each of your inbound links available.



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Shows you "anchor" text, page rank, total outbound links on that page, and no follow flag for each of your inbound links available.

Other verification tools are:

- OSINT Essentials digital toolkit: <https://www.osintessentials.com>
- Mallachy Browne's Open Source Investigative Tools: <https://start.me/p/gyvaAJ/open-source-investigative-tools>
- FirstDraft fact-checking resources <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1zn6-OurUhMnaQMY9XH3ACgxb3eWfzgVmH01dPmwqxrU/edit>
- FirstDraft resource for fact-checking photos and videos <https://firstdraftnews.org/en/education/curriculum-resource/verifying-photos-videos/>
- FirstDraft verification toolbox <https://firstdraftnews.org/verification-toolbox/>

SUMMARY NOTES ON FACT-CHECKING ELECTORAL ISSUES



Verify Sources

Use official election bodies, political parties, or credible media. Avoid anonymous social



Detect Deepfakes

Look for unnatural motion or voice distortion; verify using AI-detection tools



Monitor Manipulated Media

Use reverse image/video tools (Google, TinEye, InVID) to detect reused or edited visuals



Detect Fake Endorsements

Confirm endorsements from candidates verified accounts or official websites



Check Electoral Procedures

Verify registration deadlines, polling locations, ID rules, and ballot processes



Scrutinize Viral Rumors

Verify timestamps, locations, and original sources. Beware of recycled or decontextu



Watch for Manipulated Statistics

Examine figures and context. Be cautious of selective data or misleading visuals



Cross-Check Candidate Claims – Review public records, manifestos, and debates. Compare with independent analyses and fact-checking platforms to identify inconsistencies.



Evaluate Social Media Content

Assess influencer credibility, fact-check labels, and look for coordinated amplification



Validate Polling Data – Confirm poll sources, methodology, and sample size. Beware of outdated or cherry-picked statistics.



Confirm Voter Suppression Claims

Validate reports of station closures, shortages, or intimidation via credible-bservers



Analyze Promises

Examine feasibility, budget apact, and legal constraints. Compare with expert ipion



Analyze Promises

Examine feasibility, budget impact, and legal constraints. Compare with expert opinion



Use Fact-Checking Platforms

Rely on trusted sources. FactCheck org, Africa Check, PolitiFact, Full Fact, or local CSC



Distinguish Opinion from Fact

Identify bias in commentary and verify factual claims within opinion pieces



Document Findings

Record claims, sources, and evidence; assign ratings (False, Misleading, True, etc.)



Scrutinize Viral Rumors – Verify timestamps and origins. Old or unrelated images and videos are often reused to mislead.



Recognize Emotional Campaigns.

Detect coordinated narratives and emotional triggers before reacting.

✓ **Core Principle: Always verify before sharing—election misinformation spreads quickly and can distort public perception, turnout, and peace.**



- Misinformation Media and information literacy: policy and strategy guidelines Grizzle, Alton [35], Moore, Penny [5], Dezuanni, Michael [5], Asthana, Sanjay; Wilson, Carolyn; Banda, Fackson; Onumah, Chido2013

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Email: contact@ndr.org.ng, admin@ipcng.org

Web: www.ndr.org.ng

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The European Union Support to Democratic Governance in Nigeria (EU-SDGN) is the EU's flagship democracy support programme in Nigeria. The programme is designed to complement the efforts of the Nigerian government to improve and strengthen democracy.