

**WITNESS**  
SEE IT FILM IT  
CHANGE IT



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**Misinformation/  
disinformation  
in elections**  
tipsheet



# Stay Alert!

## Being Aware of Mis/Disinformation in Elections

Elections are a very sensitive period and the impact of mis/disinformation can disrupt the entire electoral process or worse – lead to violence.

This tip sheet aims to mitigate the impact of misinformation and disinformation in elections.

## Know the Terms



**Misinformation** is false, inaccurate or misleading information regardless of the intention to deceive – which means that an individual can unknowingly spread misinformation.



**Disinformation** is the deliberate creation, distribution, and amplification of false, inaccurate or misleading information with the intention to deceive.



**Propaganda** is information created to promote a political goal often deploying disinformation tactics. **However, facts and half-truths can be used to influence public opinion. One of its aims is to replace logic with emotions.**



**Conspiracy Theory** is a belief that a secret but powerful force is responsible for social and political events.



**BOT** is a computer controlled fake social media account often used to spread false and misleading information.



# Spot the Tactics: Fact/ Fiction?

To detect mis/disinformation, we must identify the different ways and channels it can surface.

Ask yourself: Could the information source be a key player in the election?  
Do they have a vested interest or political ties?  
Are they an external/foreign influence who may have something at stake in the electoral process?  
Or do they stand to get financial benefit from spreading disinformation?

## Mis/disinformation tactics in elections

These are tactics to be mindful of when presented with information;



**Voter Suppression Content:** Aimed at disenfranchising a targeted group of people. E.g. falsifying the date and time of the election, depicting threats of violence in a particular region, health emergency and safety scares to discourage people from voting.



**Us versus Them Content:** Exploits existing societal divisions such as; political, religious, or cultural differences to drive extreme political ideologies. It creates an environment where electorates encounter information /opinions that reflect and reinforce their held belief thereby creating an [echo chamber](#). This results in a shrinking civic space that does not allow for constructive political debates across the divide.



**Delegitimization content:** Casts doubt on the electoral process and outcome. E.g. delegitimizing candidates/parties, making speculations of foreign interference, or spreading allegations of mal-handling of ballot papers, boxes, and other sensitive materials. This should not undermine legitimate critique or concerns over any aspect of the electoral process.



**Unverified declaration of victory:** Inaccurate/falsified election results used to undermine election outcomes before the election has been concluded or officially announced by the electoral umpire. This is particularly common in closely contested elections.

# Forms of Media Manipulation

With Artificial Intelligence and new forms of media manipulation, it is increasingly challenging to verify media content – especially videos. This has a dangerous impact on the integrity of elections. Some examples of media manipulation include;

## 1 Deepfakes



Deepfakes create realistic simulations of someone's face, voice, or actions and can be used to make it seem like someone said or did something they didn't. This [deep fake video](#) shows what appears to be a newscast stating that France bribed Malian politicians not to appear at a National Consultation meant to investigate the 2021 coup in Mali. This came amid a rise in tensions between Bamako and Paris. However, the video was created through the use of [artificial intelligence video creation software](#).

Shallow fakes are selectively altered and edited videos and images e.g. cropping out certain parts of an image, speeding/slowing down a video or reposting old captions with a new one. This [shallow fake video](#) shows Raila Odinga, a leader of one of the opposition parties in Kenya watching Kenyan Deputy President William Ruto and a group of people singing a gospel song in the Kikuyu language. The aim of this video was to induce religious bias and deepen the perception that William Ruto is a more devoted Christian compared to Raila Odinga. Shallow fakes are still the most common form of media manipulation

## 2 Shallow fakes



## 3 Misleading captions and headlines



A misleading caption or one that lies by omission deliberately leaves out certain pieces of the information in order to distort the facts E.g. In Kenya, a genuine interview granted by Rigathi Gachagua (a running mate of a main presidential contestant) to a local radio station was posted online with a sub-titled English translation which read;

“We will kill it [Safaricom] and give that money to the people as handouts.”



However, what he said was;

“Instead of having one large company called Safaricom paying taxes, if you take the money from the large company and give it out to many people... the tax from the many put together will be 30 times greater than that of the large company.”

Mr. Gachagua’s statement proposed the redistribution of profits to support smaller enterprises and clearly was not a statement to “kill” corporate business.

These are media content relabeled and reposted claiming that an event that happened in one place has just happened in another. For example, a video of a ballot snatching in one location can be reused and reattributed to players in Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya, and Zimbabwe. This is capable of not just undermining the credibility of the electoral process but repeatedly inciting violence in the many locations that it is reposted.



These are media, oftentimes videos and images of events that happen in one place or period but are labeled to have happened in another location or time. This directly hinders the ability to ascertain the origin of information and trace the truth. For example, a report by [BBC](#) revealed that a widely circulated video of a massacred man from Plateau state in Nigeria was actually from a conflict in Congo - Brazzaville back in 2012 as against 2022 which is what the caption reads in Nigeria.

# Verify! Verify!! Verify!!!



## Slow Down!

When you encounter information, pause and think carefully. Be critical and ask yourself if you're biased towards the info received.



## Check the Source:

Where does the info come from? Is it from a new social media account? – that could mean a red flag. Does the source live in the same city or country where they claim the content is from? If the user account details don't match the content being posted, be careful of sharing. If your source is a chat app, check if the info was forwarded and ask the sender where they found it. If it was posted in a group, find out if they are a reliable source of information.



## Dig Deeper:

Find organizations that are trusted leaders in the topic that you are looking for information, e.g an electoral body or credible election observers and journalists might be reliable sources of information.

Research about the publishers and find out if they have political/religious affiliations that might make them biased.



## Look Closely:

Check the background details in videos to help verify its authenticity e.g. if a video reveals a group of people, is the style of dress that you'd expect from people in this region?  
Are the landmarks and language in the video, consistent with the location?



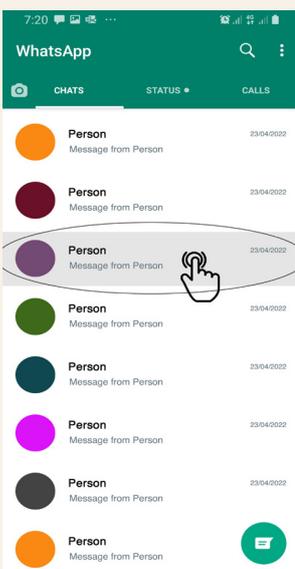
## Use Tools:

Use tools like Google Images (for still images) and the InVid plugin for Google Chrome (for videos) to check if a piece of visual media has already been posted somewhere else online.

# Quick steps on reporting mis/disinformation on WhatsApp



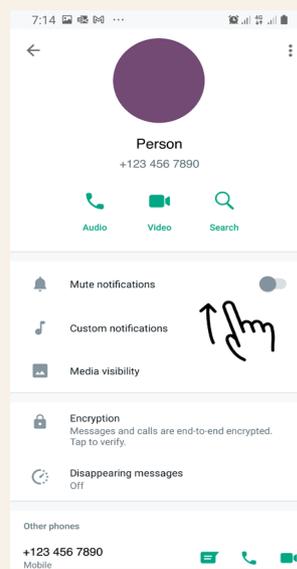
You can report an individual/group that consistently shares misleading information with these steps;



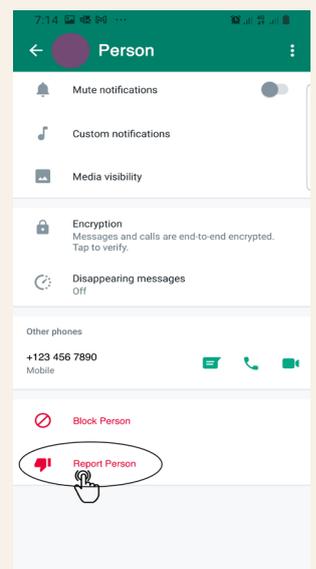
1. Open Chat



2. Tap on the contact/group to go to their profile information.



3. Scroll to the bottom



4. Tap report contact/group



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Visit  
WITNESS Africa media literacy campaign page  
for more resources.

website:  
[www.witness.org](http://www.witness.org)

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