



ACCRA DECLARATION ON INFORMATION INTEGRITY AND RESILIENCE IN AFRICA

Date: 10 October, 2024

Accra

We, the members of the Africa Facts Network, gathered in Accra, Ghana on 9 - 10 October 2024 for the sixth annual summit of African fact-checkers, information integrity professionals and information resilience experts, issue the following declaration:

Acknowledging previous submissions to two initial annual meetings, the three Africa Facts Summits and the monthly meetings of the Africa Facts Network; the African Union declarations on information access, integrity and resilience; and the commitments in the UN Global Digital Compact;

Noting with concern the many complex and complicated contexts in which African fact-checkers and information resilience practitioners work in, mostly related to freedom of and access to accurate information;

Concerned that more than half of the continent is unconnected and has no access to the internet, making it vulnerable and susceptible to harmful false information – particularly children and young people, who make up the majority of the continent's population and marginalised communities;

Aware of the many challenges faced in the fight against dis/mis/mal-information and the need to build public trust in media and information sources that reflect Africa's diverse voices and narratives;

Cognisant that the spread of harmful false information poses a significant threat to public health, safety, and democratic processes in Africa, thereby creating a snowball effect of challenges such as death, disease, political instability, violence, and public distrust of the media;

Stressing the importance of collaborative information resilience efforts, media and digital literacy work, and coordination with technology platforms and public, private, civil society, multilateral institutions and media stakeholders to ensure a multi-tentacled approach to information resilience and integrity;

Recognising the urgent need to build Africa's capacity to produce, analyse, publish, and use accurate data and information to underpin evidence-based policy development and monitor progress, thereby promoting accountability, transparency, and informed honest public debate;

And **appreciating** the ongoing efforts of fact-checkers and media professionals across the continent, as well as the support of local, regional, and international partners and technology platforms, in building information resilience, combating harmful false information, and entrenching information integrity;

Note the following areas of concern:

1. That, **gendered disinformation** damages democracy as it undermines women's participation by spreading false and harmful narratives about female candidates or public figures, reinforcing stereotypes and harassment.
2. That, election-related disinformation and information pollution often trigger **political unrest and violence**, complicating efforts to maintain public safety and trust during critical periods.
3. That, information resilience professionals in Africa face a **wide linguistic diversity** across the continent and within countries, where the peddlers of harmful falsehoods exploit the immediacy and potency of local languages to mislead the public at a time when many fact-checking tools and resources are not available in local languages, limiting their reach and effectiveness.
4. That, **public distrust of the media** and the spread of disinformation on social media makes it challenging for information resilience professionals to counter harmful false information in an environment where traditional media is often distrusted and social media platforms are rife with harmful false information.
5. That, information resilience professionals, especially fact-checkers and journalists in **politically sensitive environments**, face intimidation, threats, or violence, especially when reporting on governance, elections, and conflict-related issues.
6. That, it is helpful for information resilience professionals to **partner with media organisations and broadcasters** to extend the reach of their work, as individual fact-checking organisations sometimes lack the visibility and resources to effectively influence mass audiences.

7. That, we recognise **the vulnerability of young people** to mis/dis/mal-information and are developing targeted media literacy programmes, often using social media influencers and engaging content like short videos to raise awareness among youth.
8. That, **poor digital infrastructure and the high cost of data** in African countries limit the public's ability to access reliable information, especially when competing with entertainment content on social media;
9. That, while AI-driven tools offer opportunities to improve information integrity and resilience efforts, we remain concerned about the technological limitations of AI in Africa for the **offline communities**, and the role of AI and algorithms in amplifying harmful false information for those who are not meaningfully connected;
10. That, in many communities, **deeply ingrained false beliefs** complicate media and digital literacy efforts, as individuals may resist correcting harmful false information even when confronted with evidence.
11. That, despite partnerships with technology platforms, information resilience professionals still face **delays and inefficiencies** in removing harmful or false content, affecting their ability to promote information hygiene and inculcate information integrity in real time.
12. That, **financial constraints** are a persistent issue for fact-checkers and information resilience workers, limiting the scope of their operations, tools, and ability to reach underserved or rural communities across the continent.
13. That, information resilience workers are increasingly confronted with the spread of false narratives around **climate change and environmental issues**, which hinders informed public debate and action on these critical global concerns.

Now, therefore, we collectively resolve and commit our organisations and will endeavour to engage with the African Union and our respective governments and/or their relevant institutions to:

1. Build and expand meaningful coalitions with all information resilience players, the civil society, responsive governments, technology platforms, regional, global and multilateral institutions, and engage communities to create an inclusive environment for honest public debate and share tools, information, and strategies to build information hygiene, integrity and entrench information resilience.
2. Develop innovative educational initiatives in digital and media literacy; mis/dis-information literacy, including critical thinking, fact-checking, and responsible information use, targeting the youth, especially those in schools and universities, and marginalised communities, through information

resilience clinics, innovative formats, workshops, seminars, guest lectures, community media, and public meetings.

3. Work with innovators and technology platforms from around the world, ensuring geopolitical non-partisanship to advocate, fund, and develop robust digital infrastructure, tools, and information resilience outreach for the offline communities, including the use of community information resilience labs, offline information integrity manuals, and collaboration with technology platforms and telecommunications companies to lower data costs, and open the door for easier and ready access to accurate information.

4. To ensure the safety of information resilience professionals through strengthening laws, policies, and regulations to protect fact-checkers, journalists, and other professionals in the information space, ensuring they can work without fear of intimidation or violence; and establishing reporting mechanisms on how to address online and offline threats, and speedy responses from platforms, governments, and media freedom/press freedom advocacy groups

5. To work together to jointly develop, test, and experiment with AI-driven tools to promote information integrity and resilience, and form and even advocate for partnerships with technology platforms, and research institutions to improve access to and meaningful use of technological solutions both online and offline.

About the 2024 Africa Facts Summit

Convened annually by Africa Check, the sixth summit in Accra brought together more than 50 organisations from the region.

The network works to tackle the prevalence of harmful misinformation, dangerous disinformation and hate speech on the continent, and to embed a culture of accuracy in the media and public debate as a foundation for public accountability and improved governance, especially in 2024, a super election year in Africa.

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