

CREATING
HOPE
IN CONFLICT:

A HUMANITARIAN
GRAND CHALLENGE



SCOPING STUDY
**MISINFORMATION,
DISINFORMATION AND
HATE SPEECH IN
CONFLICT**

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Our goal is to find and accelerate life-saving or life-improving innovations to help the most vulnerable and hardest-to-reach people impacted by humanitarian crises caused by conflict.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The landscape of Misinformation, Disinformation, and Hate Speech (MDH) in humanitarian responses, especially within conflict settings, has become increasingly complex and dynamic, underscored by technological advancements and the global proliferation of AI tools like ChatGPT. The urgency to address MDH is highlighted by its rising prevalence and sophistication, as seen in recent conflicts such as Ukraine in 2023 and the ongoing situation in the Gaza Strip.

Humanitarian organizations have been actively developing and refining strategies to tackle MDH, laying foundational work in digital protection, risk mitigation, and engagement. These efforts vary across organizations, involving diverse approaches, strategies, and impacts, alongside a broad overview of the donor landscape.

Through a comprehensive approach combining literature reviews, landscape analyses, and stakeholder interviews, the study explores the multifaceted world of MDH in humanitarian contexts. It examines frameworks addressing MDH, assesses the operational landscape for humanitarian organizations in conflict zones, and identifies prevailing challenges and opportunities.

The study reveals the complexities of combating MDH through strategic, regulatory, and ecosystem-based approaches, highlighting key frameworks like Dangerous Speech, Defusing Hate, and Information Disorder. It also points to the critical challenges of measuring interventions' impact, bridging theory and practice, and adapting to rapid technological advancements.

The desk review reveals that while there are many frameworks for understanding MDH, literature on how to respond to MDH and measure the impact of these responses is sparse.

This gap in the literature is possibly due to the new operational landscape that is being created by the technological advancement of social media algorithms and AI. When literature does look at contemporary challenges, such as those posed by AI in the Russia-Ukrainian conflict, there is a tendency to advocate for law enforcement and restrictive regulations in order to address MDH, often at the expense of risks related to freedom of speech and censorship.

Key insights from the research reveal a trend towards reactive MDH responses, with a tentative focus on proactive and preventative strategies. However, there remains a notable emphasis on top-down approaches, often overlooking the importance of locally led solutions.

As nearly all humanitarian organizations face and attempt to respond to MDH, the response ecosystem appears fragmented. Two main trends emerge: an initial focus on reputational risks and organizational issues stemming from MDH, and a strong emphasis on social media companies and regulations.

The operational challenges on the other side seem to be more commonly shared across organizations, including the need for accessible resources for ground workers, methods to measure intervention effectiveness, and enhanced collaboration among stakeholders.

Similarly, funding for MDH initiatives appears fragmented, predominantly sourced from general innovation and media funds. One significant issue affecting both the donor and the implementer communities is coordination. Both donors and the humanitarian community currently lack a strong system to coordinate MDH funding, resulting in a disorganized and disconnected response on the ground.

The scoping analysis identifies opportunities for improvement, such as the development of comprehensive operational tools, robust impact evaluation frameworks, coordinated funding efforts, and collaborative platforms for MDH response coordination. The KIs conducted for this research highlight the need to strengthen partnerships focused on community ownership and community-led innovation. The humanitarian community is missing out on the resources that the localization agenda offers for MDH responses.

Efforts by organizations like ICRC, Mercy Corps, Internews, and UN agencies, each with their unique frameworks and strategies, highlight the multifaceted nature of combating MDH. The landscape analysis and desk review suggest the need for a holistic approach that balances technical solutions with an understanding of social and cultural dynamics, emphasizing the importance of global coordination, community engagement, and sustainable funding models to effectively counter MDH in humanitarian settings.

This scoping analysis underscores the imperative for innovative, collaborative, and comprehensive approaches to effectively address MDH in humanitarian conflict emergencies. By harmonizing theoretical insights with practical applications, fostering cross-sectoral collaboration, and advancing robust evaluation mechanisms, the humanitarian sector can significantly advance its fight against the scourge of MDH, ensuring a more informed, resilient, and cohesive global community in the face of conflict-induced crises.

These efforts though, will only be effective if guided by two fundamental principles: accountability to affected populations and localization. While humanitarian organizations treat MDH as a top-down communication approach, rather than as a community ownership and engagement issue, their ability to respond effectively will remain insufficient.

ACRONYMS

AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations	ICRC	International Committee of Red Cross
ABC	Actors, behaviour and content	IEA	Information Ecosystem Assessment
ABC(D&E)	Actors, behaviours, content, drivers and effect	KAB	Knowledge, Attitudes, and Behaviours
AI	Artificial Intelligence	KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
CDAC	Communication with Disaster Affected Communities Network	KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund	M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
CHF	Common Humanitarian Fund	MDH	Misinformation, Disinformation, and Hate Speech
CHIC	Creating Hope in Conflict: A Humanitarian Grand Challenge	MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
CHSA	Core Humanitarian Standard Alliance	NSAG	Non-state armed groups
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations	PRISM	Peace and Resilience in Social Media
DFID	Department for International Development (UK Government)	SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (UK Government)	ToC	Theory of Change
DSIs	Dangerous Speech Interventions	ToR	Terms of Reference
EC	European Commission	UN	United Nations
GAC	Global Affairs Canada	UN DPO	United Nations Department of Peace Operations
GCC	Grand Challenges Canada	UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
HGC	Humanitarian Grand Challenge	UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee	UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
IHL	International Humanitarian Law	USAID	United States Agency for International Development
IHRL	International Human Rights Law	VAF	Vulnerability Assessment Framework
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross	WHO	World Health Organization
INGOs	International Non-Governmental Organizations	WFP	World Food Programme
IHOs	International Humanitarian Organizations		

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Cyber Warfare	Operations conducted against a computer, computer system or network, or another connected device, using a data stream as a method of warfare within the context of an armed conflict. ¹
Dangerous speech	Speech that increases the risk for violence, targeting certain people because of their membership in groups such as ethnic, religious, or racial groups. It includes both speech that qualifies as incitement and speech that makes incitement possible by conditioning its audience to accept, condone, and commit violence against people who belong to a targeted group. ²
Digital hate speech	All forms of expression (text, images, audio) that spread, incite, promote, or justify hatred and violence based on intolerance, usually against identity traits (gender, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc.). When these forms of expression are shared or amplified through digital means, this can be referred to as digital hate speech. ³
Disinformation	Verifiably false information that is created, presented, and disseminated for economic gain or to intentionally deceive the public, and may cause public harm. ⁴ This term is also broadly defined as false information that has been fabricated or disseminated with malicious intent. ⁵
Fake news	A common term that traditionally refers to deliberate disinformation or hoaxes spread on social media or other online outlets. The term has been criticized for failing to capture the many ways in which information can be used as a vector of harm and for undermining professional journalism. ⁶
Foreign interference	Efforts to achieve a hostile foreign actor's goals using hybrid methods including disinformation and/or information influence. ⁷
Hate Speech	Any kind of communication in speech, writing or behavior that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, color, descent, gender or other identity factors. ⁸
Infodemic	An over-abundance of information, accurate or not, in the digital and physical space, accompanying an acute health event such as an outbreak or epidemic. ⁹ When multiple infodemics co-occur, they shift circulating narratives and impact people's perceptions, attitudes and behaviors. Co-occurring outbreaks can result in mixed messaging by health authorities, interrupted access to routine health information and service delivery, and confusion in the general public (particularly for vulnerable groups). ¹⁰
Information Disorder	A phrase popularized during the COVID-19 pandemic that refers to specific types of information 'pollution', including misinformation, disinformation, and misinformation. It is also commonly used to characterize the overall information environment within which information 'pollution' exists. ¹¹
Information Influence	Manipulative communication techniques used in support of an actor's goals.

1 ICRC, "International humanitarian law and the challenges of contemporary armed conflicts: Recommitting to protection in armed conflict", November 2019.

2 Susan Benesch, "Countering Dangerous Speech: New Ideas for Genocide Prevention", *Voices that Poison*, 2014.

3 ICRC, "Harmful information, misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech in armed conflict and other situations of violence", Geneva 2019.

4 High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, "Action Plan against Disinformation," *Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions*, December 5, 2018.

5 ICRC, "Harmful information, misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech in armed conflict and other situations of violence", Geneva 2019.

6 *Ibid.*

7 NATO Strategic Communications, Centre of Excellence, "A capability definition and assessment framework for countering disinformation, information influence, and foreign interference", Riga, November 2022.

8 UNSG, "United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech", May 2019.

9 WHO & UNICEF, "How to build an infodemic insights report in six steps", 2023.

10 *Ibid.*

11 Mercy Corps, "The Weaponization of Social Media: How Social Media can Spark Violence & What Can be Done About it", 2019.

Information Operations	When information disorders are manipulated for specific purposes. Can also be defined as the strategic and calculated use of information and information-sharing systems to influence, disrupt or divide society. They may involve the collection of intelligence on specific targets, disinformation campaigns or the recruitment of online influencers. ¹²
Mal-information	When genuine information is shared to cause harm, often by moving information designed to stay private into the public sphere, ¹³ or when factual information is intentionally distorted. ¹⁴
Misinformation, Disinformation and Hate Speech (MDH)	An umbrella term for any instance where information can potentially put populations of concern (e.g., people affected by armed conflict, humanitarian staff and volunteers) at risk of humanitarian consequences. This potential for harm is enabled and can be exacerbated by underlying social, cultural and historical dynamics; existing social or political tensions; people's lack of digital literacy or critical thinking when browsing for information online; lack of trusted, accurate sources to triangulate information, or over-reliance on nefarious sources, e.g. deliberately provocative websites posing as news sites. ¹⁵
Misinformation	Refers to the unintentional spread of inaccurate information shared in good faith by those unaware that they are passing on falsehoods. ¹⁶ Can be rooted in disinformation if deliberate lies and misleading narratives are weaponized over time, fed into the public discourse and passed on unwittingly. ¹⁷
Political manipulation	When disinformation campaigns are used to systematically manipulate political discourse within a state, influencing news reporting, silencing dissent, undermining the integrity of democratic governance and electoral systems, and strengthening the hand of authoritarian regimes. ¹⁸
Propaganda	The use of information, often inaccurate or misleading, to promote a particular point of view or influence a target audience. May contain some elements of truth but often presents them with bias. When propaganda is facilitated by the use of digital advertising, social media algorithms or other exploitative strategies, it is known as computational propaganda. ¹⁹
Radicalization & Recruitment	Social media is a channel of choice for some violent extremists and militant organizations as a means of recruitment, manipulation and coordination. The Islamic State (ISIS) has been particularly successful in capitalizing on the real-time reach and power of digital communication technologies. ²⁰
Rumor	Unverified information that is rapidly passed on from one person to another. They may begin as misinformation or disinformation but are distinguished by the fact that the source of the information, and therefore its credibility, is not possible to verify. ²¹ They can broadly be categorized into three types: wish rumors, fear rumors and hostility rumors. ²²

12 ICRC, "Harmful information, misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech in armed conflict and other situations of violence", Geneva 2019.

13 Claire Wardle and Hossein Derakhshan, "Information disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policy making", Council of Europe report DGI(2017)09, September 27, 2017.

14 NATO Strategic Communications, Centre of Excellence, "A capability definition and assessment framework for countering disinformation, information influence, and foreign interference", Riga, November 2022.

15 ICRC, "International humanitarian law and the challenges of contemporary armed conflicts: Recommitting to protection in armed conflict", November 2019.

16 Claire Wardle and Hossein Derakhshan, "Information disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policy making", Council of Europe report DGI(2017)09, September 27, 2017.

17 United Nations, "Information Integrity on Digital Platforms", Policy Brief 8, June 2023.

18 Mercy Corps, "The Weaponization of Social Media: How Social Media can Spark Violence & What Can be Done About it", 2019.

19 ICRC, "International humanitarian law and the challenges of contemporary armed conflicts: Recommitting to protection in armed conflict", November 2019.

20 Mercy Corps, "The Weaponization of Social Media: How Social Media can Spark Violence & What Can be Done About it", 2019.

21 ICRC, "International humanitarian law and the challenges of contemporary armed conflicts: Recommitting to protection in armed conflict", November 2019.

22 CDAC, "Rumour Has it: a practice guide to working with rumours", 2017.

INTRODUCTION

THE GRAND CHALLENGES CANADA SCOPING STUDY

Funded by the Governments of Canada, the US, the UK, the Netherlands, and various partners, Grand Challenges Canada invests in innovators across low- and middle-income countries, conflict zones, and Canada, driving impactful solutions to global health and humanitarian challenges. The bold ideas Grand Challenges Canada supports employ Integrated Innovation®—creatively combining scientific, technological, social and business innovation—as they work to catalyze their scale, sustainability, and impact. Grand Challenges Canada is one of the largest impact-first funders in Canada with over 1,500 innovations funded, championed by innovators in more than 100 countries. These innovations have already improved 20 million lives and are expected to save up to 1.78 million lives and improve up to 64 million lives by 2030.

Creating Hope in Conflict: A Humanitarian Grand Challenge (CHIC), a partnership of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), the Government of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Global Affairs Canada (GAC), with support from Grand Challenges Canada, is the first innovation challenge to focus on humanitarian crises caused by conflict. Launched in 2018, partners contributed \$38 million to enable humanitarian actors and agencies, local emergency responders, and the private sector to work alongside affected communities and to respond more nimbly to complex humanitarian emergencies.

CHIC identifies and scales innovations working to improve access to energy, health and lifesaving information that apply new insights, technologies,

and approaches to improve, and in many cases save, the lives of the most vulnerable and hardest-to-reach communities in humanitarian crises caused by conflict. It provides innovators with access to financial capital, a network of technical experts and potential investors and capacity strengthening resources, while fostering collaboration and learning within the CHIC innovator community. CHIC also seeks to create wider systems level changes within the humanitarian sector.

Within its lifesaving information portfolio, CHIC has funded a small number of innovations working to tackle misinformation, disinformation and/or hate speech (MDH), including Sentinel Project, HalaSystem and Murmurate. Robustly assessing the effects of these interventions has proven challenging. Grand Challenges Canada commissioned this scoping analysis to help inform the potential future direction of the work undertaken by CHIC and other actors working in this field.

This scoping analysis will inform the creation of a tailored framework for the humanitarian sector to counter MDH effectively. It will provide a strategic blueprint for stakeholders to guide future interventions and initiatives. As part of this framework, an impact measurement system will be designed to assess MDH interventions in fragile and conflict affected settings and facilitate the monitoring and evaluation of their impact, enabling data-driven decision-making. The final outcome of this scoping study will include specific, actionable recommendations about areas where CHIC and other donors can strategically focus their efforts to address MDH (see full Terms of Reference in Annex I).

SCOPING ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY

This scoping analysis employs a collaborative approach firmly anchored in practical application, recognizing that countering misinformation requires collaboration that draws on the wisdom of experts, practitioners, and donors. Through collaborative partnerships and active engagement with stakeholders, this analysis aims to inform solutions that are not merely theoretical but are deeply rooted in the realities of humanitarian practice.

The goal of this document is to answer to three main questions:

- 1. What existing frameworks are available for understanding, responding and measuring counter-misinformation activities?**
- 2. What is the current situation for humanitarian organizations working in conflict areas? What systems, frameworks, and funding mechanisms are they using?**
- 3. Based on answers to the above questions, what are the current challenges, gaps and opportunities?**

This scoping analysis is organized into three sections, each employing a mix of qualitative and quantitative methodologies:

Literature Review: The first section is the result of a systematic review of existing literature, reports, and studies on misinformation and disinformation in humanitarian contexts. Approximately 100 documents were analyzed for this review (see complete list in Annex V).

Landscape Analysis: The second section presents a landscape analysis of the current situation. This process involved the consultant's participation in conferences and workshops on the subject of MDH, including her role as a support expert for the CDAC network on the Gaza response. Additionally, around 30 Key Informants Interviews (see Annex III) were conducted with stakeholders from the humanitarian and innovation communities to discuss their current experiences, challenges, and strategies for addressing misinformation and disinformation. An additional survey was shared online with academia, tech companies, UN agencies and INGOs (see results in Annex VI).

Recommendations for Grand Challenges Canada, donors and implementing organizations on MDH funding and approaches moving forward.

LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH

To frame this analysis within the initial budget and time frame (4 months) the consultant and Grand Challenges Canada decided to focus this study on a narrow and specific scope.

Firstly, this analysis only examines frameworks and organizations involved in humanitarian responses to conflict. While responses addressing state military and intelligence efforts to manage misinformation or disinformation in conflict are highly relevant, they fall outside the objectives of Grand Challenges Canada and their grants. Therefore, while one framework addressing these types of responses is shown as an example in the Case Studies (NATO), this scoping analysis does not delve into state-managed responses to MDH.

Secondly, frameworks exclusively focused on policies and social media companies' regulations were not analyzed. As explained above, while these types of responses are necessary for a holistic approach to countering MDH, they also do not fall easily within the scope of the humanitarian grants managed by Grand Challenges Canada. However, one organization within the current humanitarian landscape has been working mainly in that direction, and their approach is outlined here.

It goes without saying that the field of MDH is vast and ever-changing, which is evident from the second part of this review that examines the current situation. As the reader will see, most humanitarian organizations working on MDH are in the process of developing, testing and trialing various approaches, with no unique or unified approach emerging so far. This also means that the landscape analysis part of this report will become outdated quickly.

MIS/DISINFORMATION IN CONFLICT

Today's humanitarian organizations universally recognize the profound impact of digital technologies on their response strategies.²³ These technologies, while offering significant benefits in improving the lives of those affected by war and violence and aiding humanitarian efforts, also bring new challenges and can intensify existing vulnerabilities. This dual-edged nature of digital technologies, particularly in their potential to create what are often termed "digital risks", necessitates a careful approach in humanitarian operations.²⁴

Looking ahead, one of the most daunting frontiers is the integration and impact of artificial intelligence (AI) in the dissemination of information, especially on social media. AI's potential to generate convincing false content, such as deepfakes, or to manipulate data at an unprecedented scale, poses a new set of challenges.²⁵ These technological advancements could significantly complicate the detection of misinformation and disinformation, requiring humanitarian organizations to not only stay abreast of technological developments but also innovate in their response strategies.²⁶

In this complex and ever-changing environment, it is imperative for donors and humanitarian organizations to remain vigilant. Understanding the historical context and the technological advancements in misinformation and disinformation is not just an academic exercise; it is a necessity for crafting effective strategies in conflict-affected areas.²⁷ This review aims to provide a foundation for such understanding, enabling informed decision-making and the development of robust mechanisms to counter the adverse effects of misinformation and disinformation in conflict settings.

23 ICRC, "Symposium report: Digital risks in armed conflicts", 2020.

24 ICRC, "Harmful information, misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech in armed conflict and other situations of violence", Geneva 2019.

25 Kwong, F, Cornell International Law Journal, "Fake News in International Conflicts: A Humanitarian Crisis in the Post-Truth Era", Jul. 20, 2022.

26 Modern War Institute, "Toward a whole-of-society framework for countering disinformation", 2021.

27 Brew, Chris & Spink, Lauren, Center for Civilians in Conflict, "Disinformation Harms Civilians in Conflict in More Ways Than You Thought", Aug. 20, 2022.

LITERATURE REVIEW

EXISTING APPROACHES TO MIS/DISINFORMATION

For the purpose of this literature review we will use MDH to indicate misinformation, disinformation, mal-information and hate speech (see Annex II for more information about terminology).

MDH can be found in all fields, from governance and peacebuilding to health, human rights, and humanitarian conflicts. For this reason, various approaches to MDH have been developed, depending on the specific focus of the organization/institution that created and used that approach.

In this section of the literature review, the consultant analyzes 10 significant approaches to MDH, including their possible responses and impacts. These frameworks have been selected because they are either related to conflicts or can be adapted for use in conflict settings. The table below shows the specific focus of each framework and whether it includes a theoretical framework²⁸ (e.g., a theory of change), a response framework and an evaluation framework to assess the impact of these responses.

The consultant identified four distinct categories of approaches (see Figure 1), acknowledging that this categorization is somewhat arbitrary and artificial but still useful for structuring the extensive body of knowledge and research on this subject.

Table 1. Ten approaches to MDH

Name of the approach	Focus of the approach	Has a theoretical framework	Has a response framework	Has an evaluation framework
Countering Dangerous Speech	HS/Behavioral Change	Yes	Yes	No
Defusing Hate	HS/Behavioral Change	Yes	Yes	No
Information Disorder	Research and policymaking	Yes	Yes	No
Disinformation ABC	Regulatory & industry response to MDH	Yes	No	No
The ABCDE Framework	EU Policy	Yes	No	No
The 4 i Framework	Communication and Trust	No	Yes	No
Balancing Act	Freedom of Expression	Yes	Yes	No
Weaponization of SM + PRISM	MDH in Conflict	Yes	Yes	No
Information Ecosystem	Media/Humanitarian	Yes	Yes	No
Information Incidents	Identify and respond to MDH	Yes	Yes	No

28 In this review we define Framework as "a particular set of rules, ideas, or beliefs which you use in order to deal with problems or to decide what to do" but also as "a structure that forms a support or frame".

Figure 1. Four categories of approaches to mis/disinformation



STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION APPROACHES

1. COUNTERING DANGEROUS SPEECH
2. DEFUSING HATE

These frameworks are built under the umbrella of the prevention of violence and prevention of genocide, and are specifically created to inform strategic communication responses to Hate Speech.

Both these frameworks use this lens to look at community engagement, and to dive into the understanding of triggers and drivers of violence.



RESPONSE BASED APPROACHES

6. THE 4 I FRAMEWORK
7. BALANCING ACT
8. WEAPONIZATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND PRISM

These approaches may or may not have a specific theoretical framework, but they all look at MDH from the perspective of an active response. Here we can find different ways in which organizations have tried to respond, and possible models for decision-making in a humanitarian response.



ABCD FRAMEWORKS

3. INFORMATION DISORDER
4. DISINFORMATION ABC
5. THE ABCDE FRAMEWORK

These frameworks are all based on a variation of the ABC(D&E) taxonomy: they analyze MDH by looking at Actors, Behaviors, Content, Drivers, and Effect. While the specific taxonomy may change from one framework to another, these frameworks all dive in detail into the understanding of the components and phases of MDH.



INFORMATION ECOSYSTEM APPROACHES

9. INFORMATION ECOSYSTEM
10. INFORMATION INCIDENTS

These approaches are all created around the specific ecosystem in which content is produced, shared and used. These approaches often look at the role of media and communities in the MDH response and create frameworks that are more outwards oriented in terms of collaboration and locally led responses.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION APPROACHES

The two approaches analyzed below focus on strategic communication to prevent violence and hate speech. These approaches are grounded in understanding the societal and psychological triggers that lead to violence, emphasizing the role of influential leaders and media in shaping public perception.

Both frameworks are effective for long-term behavioral change but may be less practical in immediate, high-pressure conflict scenarios due to their resource- and time-intensive nature. They are, however, particularly suited for anticipatory actions and preventive measures, especially in protracted conflicts.

I. Countering Dangerous Speech²⁹

Susan Benesch's *Countering Dangerous Speech* theory offers a comprehensive approach to understanding and mitigating the impact of speech that can incite violence. Benesch defines 'dangerous speech' as distinct from hate speech, focusing on its potential to lead to violence against groups. The theory introduces a systematic framework for analyzing such speech within its context, considering the content, the speaker, the audience, the social and historical backdrop, and the medium used for dissemination. This framework helps identify the mechanisms through which speech can become dangerous and forms the basis for developing targeted interventions.

This framework proposes a five-part analysis consisting of the message, the audience, the historical and social context, the speaker, and the medium. The theory emphasizes the importance of understanding the speaker's influence, the audience's grievances, the nature of the speech act, the context, and the dissemination method. These factors are critical for assessing the potential of speech to incite violence.

Benesch advocates for a response to dangerous speech that avoids censorship, focusing instead on counter-speech strategies. These include promoting alternative narratives, boosting media literacy, and developing resilience within communities against dangerous speech.

The aim is to make audiences less susceptible to harmful narratives by educating them to recognize and reject such speech and by fostering environments where diverse perspectives are heard. This approach underscores the importance of addressing the audience's role in the communication process and highlights non-restrictive methods for mitigating the impact of dangerous speech.

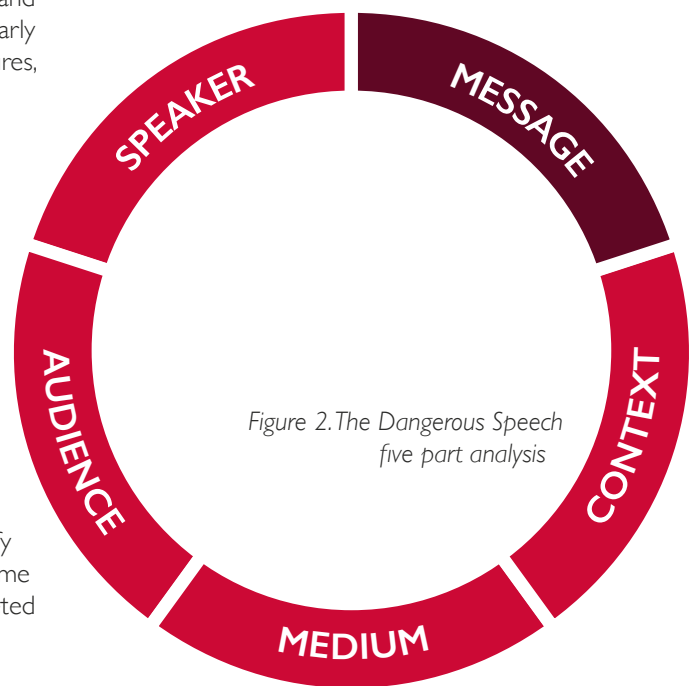


Figure 2. The Dangerous Speech five part analysis

The theory also stresses the significance of contextual analysis in countering dangerous speech, suggesting that understanding cultural, historical, social contexts is key for effective intervention. Benesch proposes a framework for selecting the most promising tools for countering dangerous speech in specific situations. This approach emphasizes the need for targeted interventions that consider all aspects of dangerous speech.³⁰

The *Countering Dangerous Speech* framework provides a valuable method for identifying, understanding, and mitigating speech that poses a risk of inciting violence. It emphasizes a nuanced, context-sensitive approach that goes beyond censorship, advocating for education,

29 Susan Benesch, "Countering Dangerous Speech", Working paper, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2014.

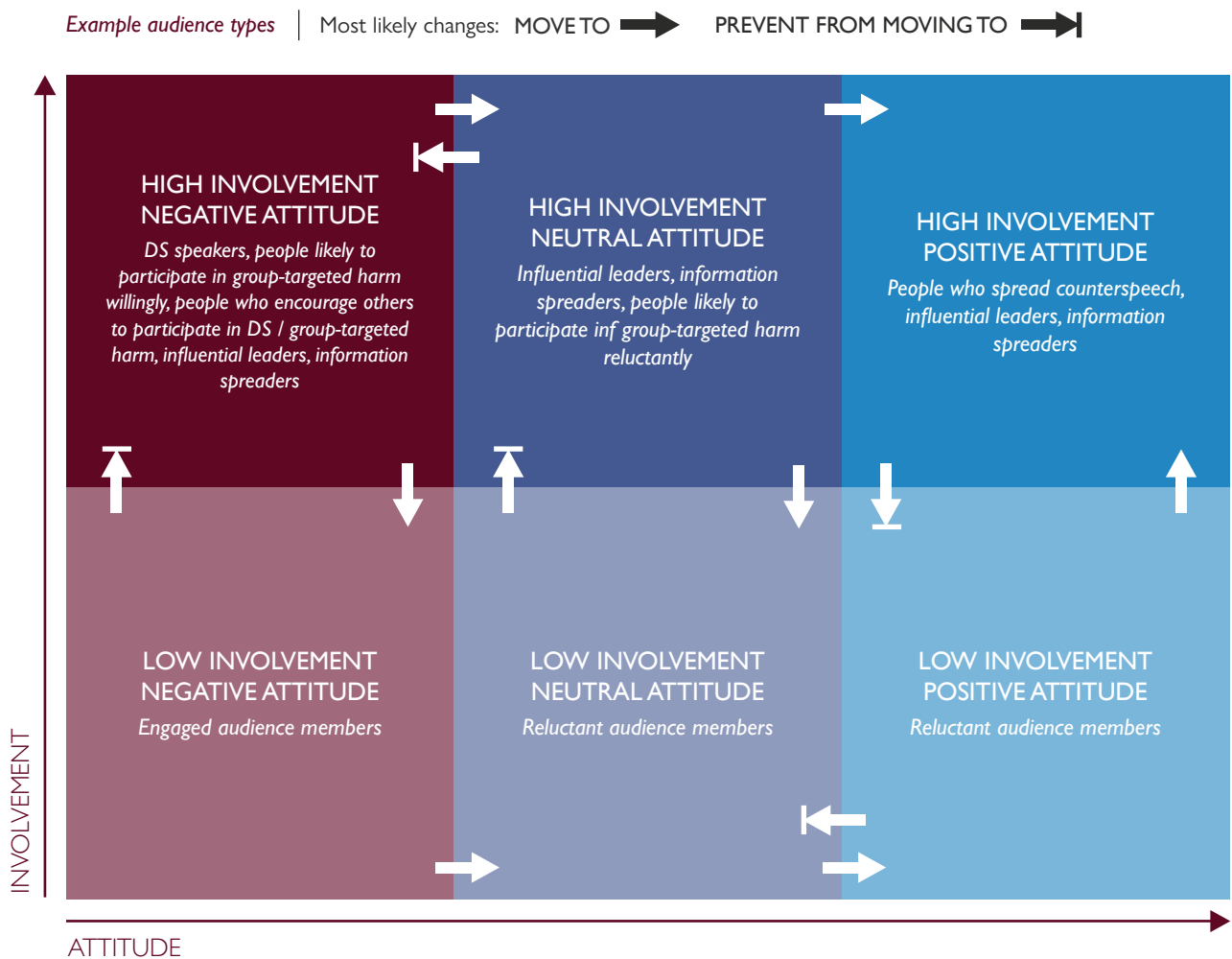
30 Susan Benesch, "Countering Dangerous Speech: New Ideas for Genocide Prevention", *Voices that Poison*, 2014.

counter-narratives, and community resilience as key strategies. By focusing on the dynamics between the speaker, the speech, and the audience, and considering the broader social and historical context, Benesch's theory offers a clear roadmap for effectively countering dangerous speech and promoting a safer, more inclusive discourse.

2. Defusing Hate: A Strategic Communication Guide to Counteract Dangerous Speech³¹

In 2016, Rachel Brown developed a guide for the Holocaust Museum, *Defusing Hate: A Strategic Communication Guide to Counteract Dangerous Speech*, designed to equip organizations with effective strategies to counteract dangerous speech. Building on Susan Benesch's foundational work, the guide offers practical tools and information for creating dangerous speech interventions (DSIs). DSIs aim to reduce the acceptance and spread of dangerous speech, minimize group-targeted harm, and encourage audiences to actively oppose group-targeted hate.

Figure 3. *Defusing Hate: Charting attitude and involvement*



31 Rachel Brown, "Defusing Hate: A Strategic Communication Guide to Counteract Dangerous Speech", 2017.

Brown's guide emphasizes the importance of strategic communication in executing DSIs, highlighting the need to reach and influence specific audiences susceptible to dangerous speech. Successful interventions require understanding why certain audiences are receptive, selecting suitable speakers and mediums for influence, crafting engaging messages, and acknowledging and mitigating potential risks. The guide provides a comprehensive overview of strategies, tools, and risk assessment methods to enhance the impact of counter-speech initiatives.

Unlike other counter-speech methods, Brown's guide places significant emphasis on the context and aims for behavioral change rather than merely correcting misinformation. She recommends segmenting audiences based on their reactions to dangerous speech, and

tailoring interventions to their specific attitudes and behaviors. This approach involves analyzing social norms, attitudes, beliefs, and emotions that drive audience behaviors, moving beyond fact-checking to effect deeper change.

Lastly, Brown provides a framework for organizations to assess and address potential risks involved in counteracting dangerous speech. This involves evaluating the likelihood of risks occurring and their potential impact, guiding organizations in developing effective strategies for engagement. While not a comprehensive framework for understanding MDH, *Defusing Hate* stands out as a resource with specific technical methodologies for efficiently developing content and engaging communities to counter MDH effectively.

ABCD APPROACHES

ABCD Frameworks dissect MDH by examining actors, behaviors, content, drivers, and effects. In this section, we present three of these frameworks. While they offer a thorough understanding of MDH, they often require extensive research and analysis capabilities, including a strong engagement with local communities, which can be challenging in conflict zones.

3. Information Disorder Framework³²

In 2017, Claire Wardle, PhD and Hossein Derakhshan published *Information Disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policymaking*, which addresses the complexities of information disorder in the digital age. The report acknowledges the unprecedented scale of information pollution globally, driven by social technology, and examines the intricate reasons behind the creation and spread of such content.

The authors propose a framework based on three types of information disorder: misinformation, where false information is shared without harmful intent; disinformation, involving the deliberate spread of falsehoods; and mal-information, where true information is used to cause harm. The framework categorizes the elements of information disorder into agents, messages, and interpreters (see Figure 4). It requires a detailed examination of each element, asking critical questions about the types of actors, their organizational levels, motivations, target

audiences, and intentions. Messages are scrutinized for their duration, accuracy, legality, target, and the type of misleading content they might represent. For interpreters, the authors suggest analyzing how messages are understood and the actions taken in response.

Wardle and Derakhshan also describe the lifecycle of information disorder in three stages: creation, production, and distribution. This lifecycle helps explain how messages evolve from their inception to public dissemination. They advocate mapping out actors across these phases to better understand their roles and impacts in spreading information disorder.

The report explores various strategies to combat the three types of information disorder. Technological solutions include developing tools to detect false information while stressing the importance of human judgment. Strengthening media involves supporting credible journalism and promoting ethical reporting standards. Education focuses on enhancing media literacy to help individuals critically assess information. The authors also discuss regulation, advocating for transparency and accountability, while cautioning against the risks of censorship.

In summary, Wardle and Derakhshan's report emphasizes the need for a comprehensive, interdisciplinary approach that combines technology, media

32 C. Wardle & H. Derakhshan, "Information disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policy making", Council of Europe report DGI(2017)09, September 27, 2017.

Figure 4. Mapping information disorder

AGENT	<p>ACTOR TYPE Official / Unofficial</p> <p>LEVEL OF ORGANIZATION None / Loose / Tight / Networked</p> <p>TYPES OF MOTIVATION Financial / Political / Social / Psychological</p> <p>LEVEL OF AUTOMATION Human / Cyborg / Bot</p> <p>INTENDED AUDIENCE Members / Social groups / Entire societies</p> <p>INTENT TO HARM Yes / No</p> <p>INTENT TO MISLEAD Yes / No</p>
MESSAGE	<p>DURATION Long term / Short term / Event based</p> <p>ACCURACY Misleading / Manipulating / Fabricated</p> <p>LEGALITY Legal / Illegal</p> <p>IMPOSTER No / Brand / Individual</p> <p>TARGET Individual / Organization / Social group / Entire societies</p>
INTERPRETER	<p>MESSAGE READING Hegemonic / Oppositional / Negotiated</p> <p>ACTION TAKEN Ignored / Shared in support / Shared in opposition</p>

integrity, education, and regulation. They underline the importance of understanding the motivations of content creators, the nature of the messages, and how these messages are interpreted by the public. Their framework is grounded in the belief that only with a shared understanding of these complexities can we constructively tackle the challenges posed by misinformation, disinformation, and mal-information in our societies.

4. Actors, Behaviors, Content: A Disinformation ABC³³

In 2019, Camille François from Graphika and the Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society at Harvard University introduced the ABC approach to understanding and countering disinformation. This framework, which stands for Actors, Behaviors, and Content, aims to dissect the complex issue of viral deception and guide both regulatory and industry responses. It recognizes that while disinformation campaigns exploit a broad information ecosystem, technology companies' responses are often isolated within individual platforms or products.

The ABC approach does not offer a singular definition of disinformation but instead focuses on three key vectors of viral deception to inform appropriate remedies: manipulative actors who intentionally engage in deceptive campaigns, often concealing their identities; deceptive behaviors that exaggerate the reach and impact of these campaigns through techniques like bots or troll farms; and the content, which is the most visible to users and hence often the focus of regulatory efforts. The authors stress the importance of understanding the interconnectedness of these vectors and the challenges they pose for detection and enforcement.

33 Camille François Graphika & Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society at Harvard University, "Actors, Behaviors, Content: A Disinformation ABC. Highlighting Three Vectors of Viral Deception to Guide Industry & Regulatory Responses", 2019.

For policymakers and regulators, the ABC framework provides a set of recommendations for designing effective responses to disinformation. It emphasizes the need for balanced approaches that address not just harmful content, but also the roles of manipulative actors and deceptive behaviours. The framework suggests that different disciplines, such as cybersecurity for detecting manipulative actors and consumer protection for regulating deceptive behaviours, are essential for addressing these dimensions.

The authors highlight the information asymmetry between technology platforms and other stakeholders, such as the public, media, and policymakers. This gap presents a significant challenge in analyzing issues and evaluating the impact of remedies. The ABC framework underscores the necessity for stakeholders to have meaningful insights into both the problems of disinformation and the effectiveness of the measures in place to combat it.

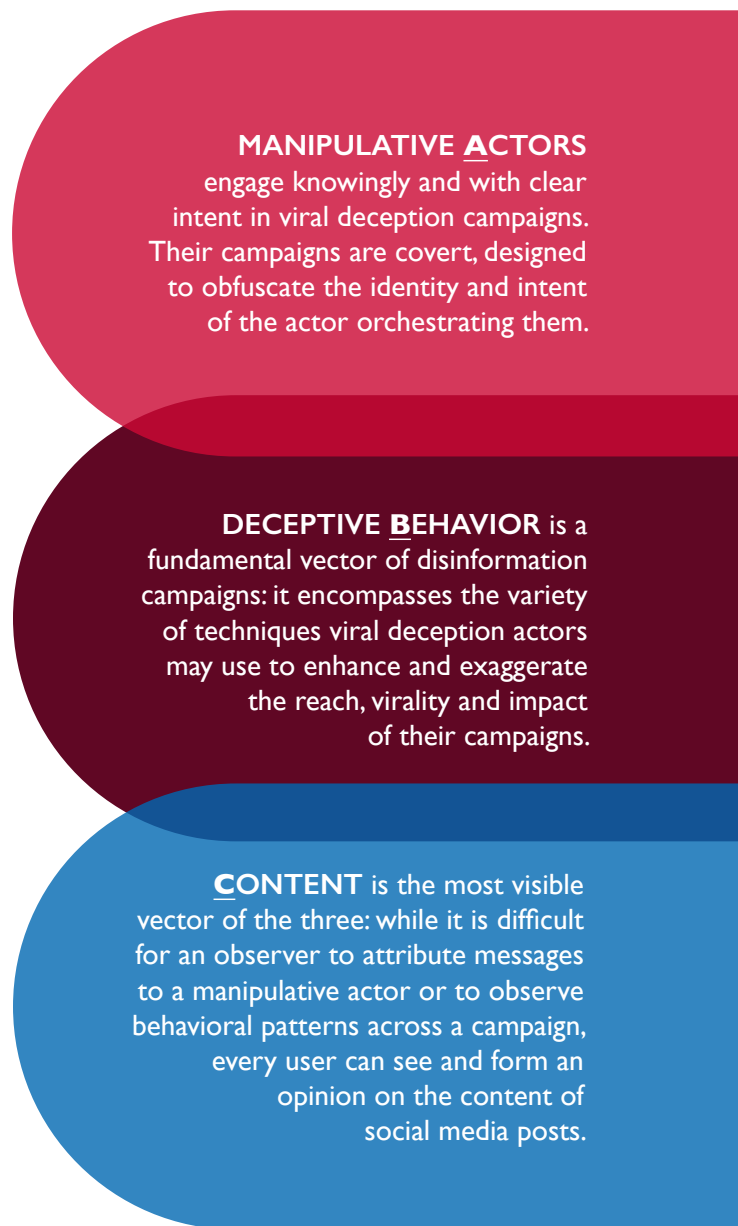
While the ABC framework focuses on organized disinformation campaigns, it is noted that it may not be as applicable to widespread misinformation where a manipulative actor is not as clearly defined. This suggests the need for a differentiated approach when dealing with disinformation, which involves state or non-state actors with a clear intent to deceive, as opposed to misinformation, which may be spread by civilians without malicious intent.

5. The ABCDE Framework³⁴

The *Crafting an EU Disinformation Framework* paper, published in 2020, is a part of the *Future Threats, Future Solutions* series and contributes to shaping the EU's policy on disinformation. It establishes a structured approach to understanding and addressing influence operations by introducing the ABCDE framework. This methodology aims to help EU institutions categorize and respond to disinformation by analyzing the actor, behavior, content, degree, and effect of information campaigns. The paper sets the stage for a systematic policy response, suggesting that the framework's flexibility allows it to be adapted to various sources and user needs for thorough assessments and reporting.

The ABCDE framework prompts users to question the nature of the actors involved (e.g., foreign state actors), the behaviors exhibited (such as coordination and inauthenticity), the types of content created, and the degree

Figure 5. Disinformation ABC: Three key vectors



MANIPULATIVE ACTORS engage knowingly and with clear intent in viral deception campaigns. Their campaigns are covert, designed to obfuscate the identity and intent of the actor orchestrating them.

DECEPTIVE BEHAVIOR is a fundamental vector of disinformation campaigns: it encompasses the variety of techniques viral deception actors may use to enhance and exaggerate the reach, virality and impact of their campaigns.

CONTENT is the most visible vector of the three: while it is difficult for an observer to attribute messages to a manipulative actor or to observe behavioral patterns across a campaign, every user can see and form an opinion on the content of social media posts.

and effect of the campaigns in terms of actual harm and severity. These components facilitate a clear analysis of disinformation cases, aiding in the identification of the appropriate terms and the assignment of institutional responsibilities within the EU.

This approach goes beyond mere analysis; it also serves as a diagnostic tool to help determine the most fitting description for specific instances of disinformation.

34 James Pamment, "The EU's Role in Fighting Disinformation: Crafting A Disinformation Framework", 2020.

ACTOR

What kinds of actors are involved?

BEHAVIOR

What activities are exhibited?

CONTENT

What kinds of content are created and distributed?

DEGREE

What is the distribution and reach of the content?

EFFECT

What is the overall impact and who does it affect?

By understanding the characteristics of malign activities, EU entities can more effectively distribute the management of various challenges to different EU bodies. These assignments can be based on the unique strengths and capabilities of each institution, ensuring a more targeted and effective response.

In terms of counteracting disinformation, the framework outlines potential countermeasures that could be implemented. These include democracy-building initiatives like fact-checking, media literacy training, and research into misinformation's impact; norm-defining initiatives that include strategic communication and content regulation; resilience-building efforts such as community programs and norms for digital platform behavior; and adversary-influencing efforts that focus on denying benefits to those spreading disinformation. Each of these countermeasures is designed to bolster the EU's defenses against the harmful effects of disinformation.

The framework is noteworthy for its focus on the 'degree' component, which assesses the actual harm caused by disinformation. This aspect enables a response tailored to the potential impact of the disinformation, aiming to mitigate the specific harms. It represents an evolution in disinformation frameworks by directly linking response strategies to the scale of the threat, thereby aiming to achieve a targeted impact and effectively counteract the spread of malicious content.

While this framework is useful for addressing MDH at the EU level, it may not be suitable for humanitarian organizations, which must remain neutral even when disinformation is propagated by state actors. Additionally, the framework exclusively addresses disinformation cases, raising concerns about how the EU and other actors can actually prove that the information in question is indeed spread by all actors involved with the intention of causing harm.

Figure 6. ABCDE Framework: Five components of analyzing information campaigns

RESPONSE-BASED APPROACHES

Response-based approaches to MDH are action-oriented, focusing on immediate responses to MDH incidents. The two frameworks analyzed here concentrate on communication, trust and freedom of expression. While these approaches are valuable for immediate action, they may benefit from integration with more comprehensive frameworks that address the underlying causes and long-term impacts of MDH.

6. The 4 i Framework for Advancing Communication and Trust³⁵

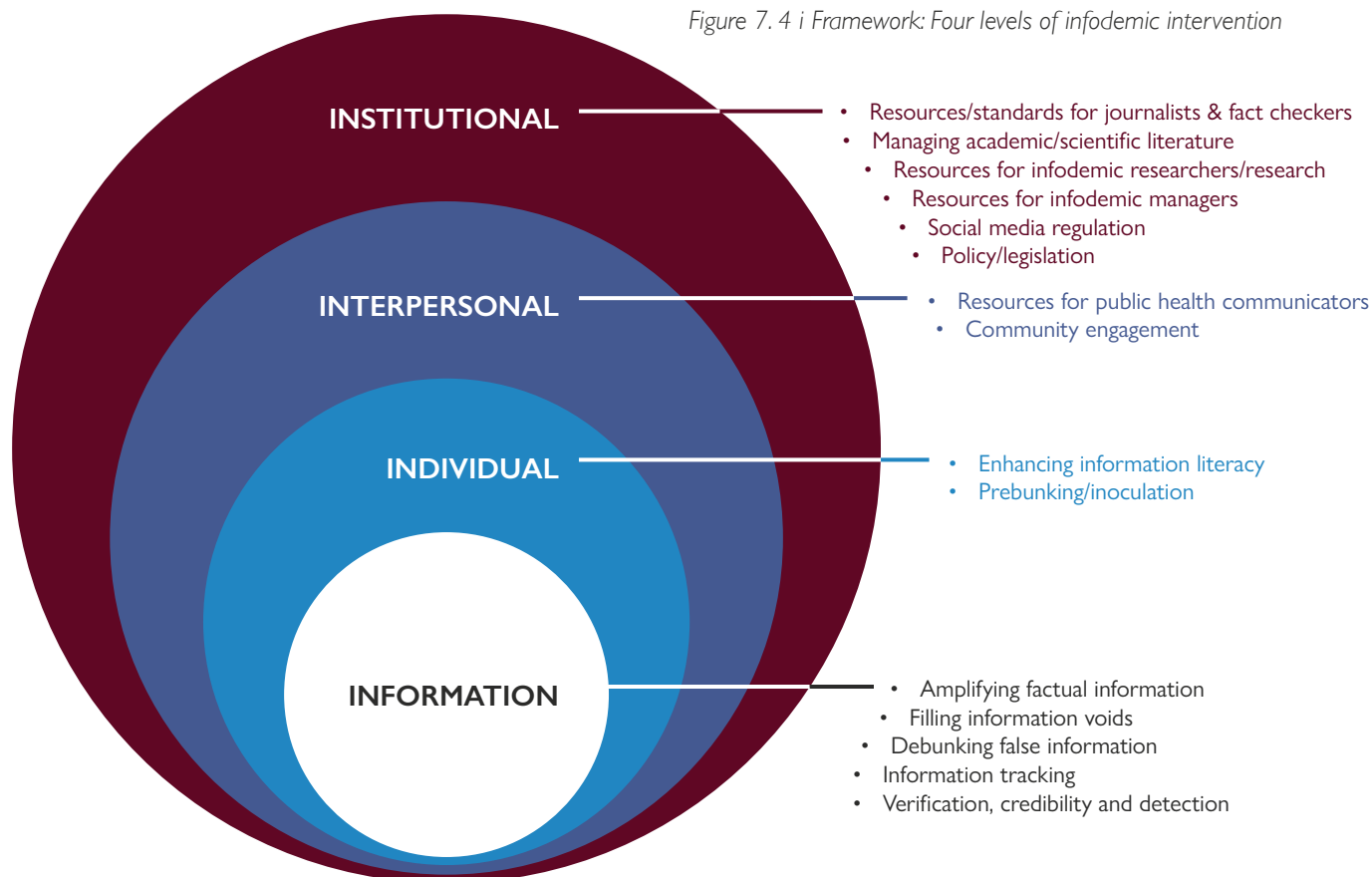
The *4 i Framework for Advancing Communication and Trust* highlights that the proliferation of false and misleading health claims poses a significant threat to public health. This ongoing 'infodemic' has led numerous organizations to develop tools and strategies to manage the

spread of falsehoods and communicate effectively in an environment of mistrust and misleading information. However, these tools and approaches have not been systematically characterized, which limits their utility.

The framework provides a clear characterization of the current ecosystem of infodemic management strategies, enabling public health practitioners, communicators, researchers, and policymakers to better understand the tools at their disposal.

The authors introduce the 4 i Framework for Advancing Communication and Trust (4 i FACT), a modified social-ecological model, to characterize different levels of infodemic intervention: informational, individual, interpersonal, and institutional.

Figure 7. 4 i Framework: Four levels of infodemic intervention



35 A. E. Sundelson, A. M. Jamison, N. Huhn, S. Pasquino and T. K. Sell, "Fighting the infodemic: the 4 i Framework for Advancing Communication and Trust", 2023.

- **Information-level strategies** include those designed to amplify factual information, fill information voids, debunk false information, track circulating information, and verify, detect, or rate the credibility of information.
- **Individual-level strategies** aim to enhance information literacy and provide pre-bunking/inoculation tools.
- Strategies at the **interpersonal / community level** include resources for public health communicators and community engagement approaches.
- **Institutional / structural approaches** include resources for journalists and fact checkers, tools for managing academic/scientific literature, resources for infodemic research, resources for managers, social media regulation, and policy/legislation.

The 4 i FACT provides a useful framework for characterizing the current ecosystem of infodemic management strategies. Recognizing the complex and multifaceted nature of the ongoing infodemic, it is crucial to utilize and integrate strategies across all four levels of the modified social-ecological model. However, the model is broad and does not fully address the nuances involved in addressing MDH in conflict settings.

7. Balancing Act: Countering Digital Disinformation While Respecting Freedom of Expression³⁶

UNESCO's report *Balancing Act: Responding to Disinformation While Defending Freedom of Expression*, published in 2020, differs from this scoping review in its use of the term 'disinformation', which they use to describe false or misleading content with potentially harmful consequences regardless of the underlying intentions or behaviors in its production and circulation. The report focuses on how States, companies, institutions, and organizations around the world are responding to this phenomenon.

UNESCO introduces a novel typology of 11 responses that aim to address the disinformation crisis on an international scale, including during COVID-19. The typology categorizes responses based on their goals in addressing specific aspects of the problem, rather than by the actors involved (e.g. internet communication companies, governments, civil society, etc.).

The framing helps identify all actors involved in each category of disinformation response. Although many actors currently operate independently and sometimes unilaterally, this response-based categorization can highlight opportunities for future synergies towards a multi-stakeholder approach. The categorization also has the ability to analyze the impact of each response type on freedom of expression and, where relevant, other fundamental rights such as privacy. Each response category is evaluated not only in terms of its general strengths and weaknesses, but specifically in relation to its effects on freedom of expression.

36 UNESCO, "Balancing Act: Countering Digital Disinformation While Respecting Freedom of Expression", 2020.

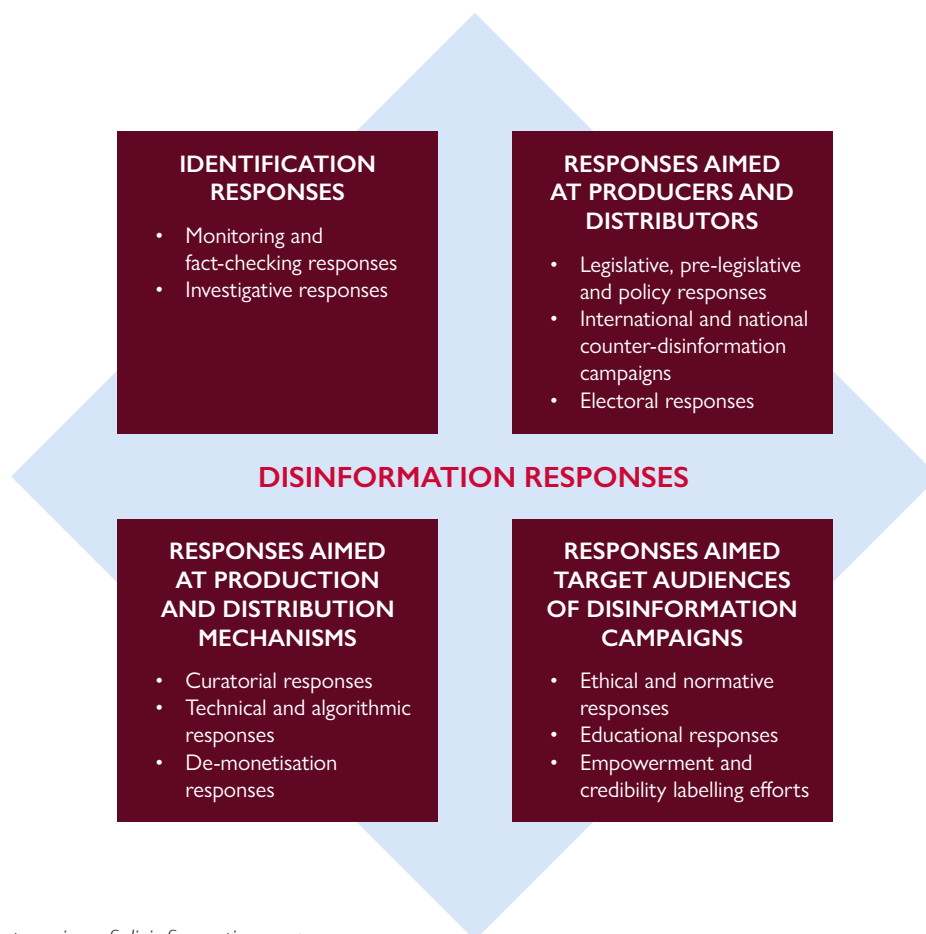


Figure 8. *Balancing Act: Four categories of disinformation responses*

The typology of disinformation responses distinguishes four top-level categories (see Figure 8).

The report provides a 23-step tool developed to assess disinformation responses, including their impact on freedom of expression. This tool is designed to assist UNESCO Member States to formulate legislative, regulatory, and policy responses that counter disinformation while respecting freedom of expression, access to information and privacy rights.

While this framework is among the first to detail a range of response options, it lacks robust evidence regarding the effectiveness and actual impact of suggested measures.

8. Weaponization of Social Media³⁷ and PRISM Frameworks

In 2019, Mercy Corps developed the *Weaponization of Information Framework* to understand the relationship between social media and conflict, particularly how online information can lead to offline violence. The framework analyses six categories: Information Architecture, Key Influencers, Underlying Conflict Drivers, Windows of Risk, Accelerating Characteristics, and Sources of Resilience. This approach provides insights into the flow of information, influential individuals or groups, conflict vulnerabilities susceptible to manipulation, periods of heightened risk, and the dynamics through which social media can transform conflict.

The framework categorizes the harm caused by the weaponization of information into physical, psychological, and social harm to communities. It also examines the adverse effects on humanitarian organizations,

37 Mercy Corps, "The weaponization of social media - How social media can spark violence and what can be done about it", 2019.

highlighting challenges such as compromised situational awareness, damage to critical systems or relationships, and the diversion of attention and resources. This taxonomy of harm details the direct and indirect impacts of weaponized information on both the populations served by these organizations and the organizations themselves.

Mercy Corps' research indicates that the likelihood of harmful outcomes from the weaponization of information depends on the interplay of environmental factors within information ecosystems. These factors can range from robust and resilient systems to weak, volatile, asymmetric, or hostile ones. The susceptibility of an information ecosystem to harm is determined by the foundational conditions that predispose it to digital harms, pathways through which these harms manifest, and signals indicating the weaponization of social media.

Mercy Corps identified three key environmental factors in digital harm: the conditions that make a society more susceptible to digital harm; the pathways to digital harm, which describe how these harms occur, either

intentionally or unintentionally; and the signals of digital harm, which are indicators or early warning signs of the weaponization of social media. Understanding these factors is crucial for recognizing how misinformation and disinformation can lead to violence and conflict.

To effectively address the weaponization of social media, interventions must consider the complex, interconnected, and non-linear nature of information ecosystems and the various factors at play. Mercy Corps' framework stresses the importance of a holistic approach that accounts for the myriad elements contributing to the weaponization of information. This approach allows for the design of strategies to mitigate the risk and impacts of harmful information on both communities and organizations working in conflict and post-conflict environments.

The proposed response framework³⁸ advocates for collective, comprehensive responses to the digital drivers of conflict, identifying key entry points in the life cycle of weaponized social media where public, private and non-profit organizations can make a difference.

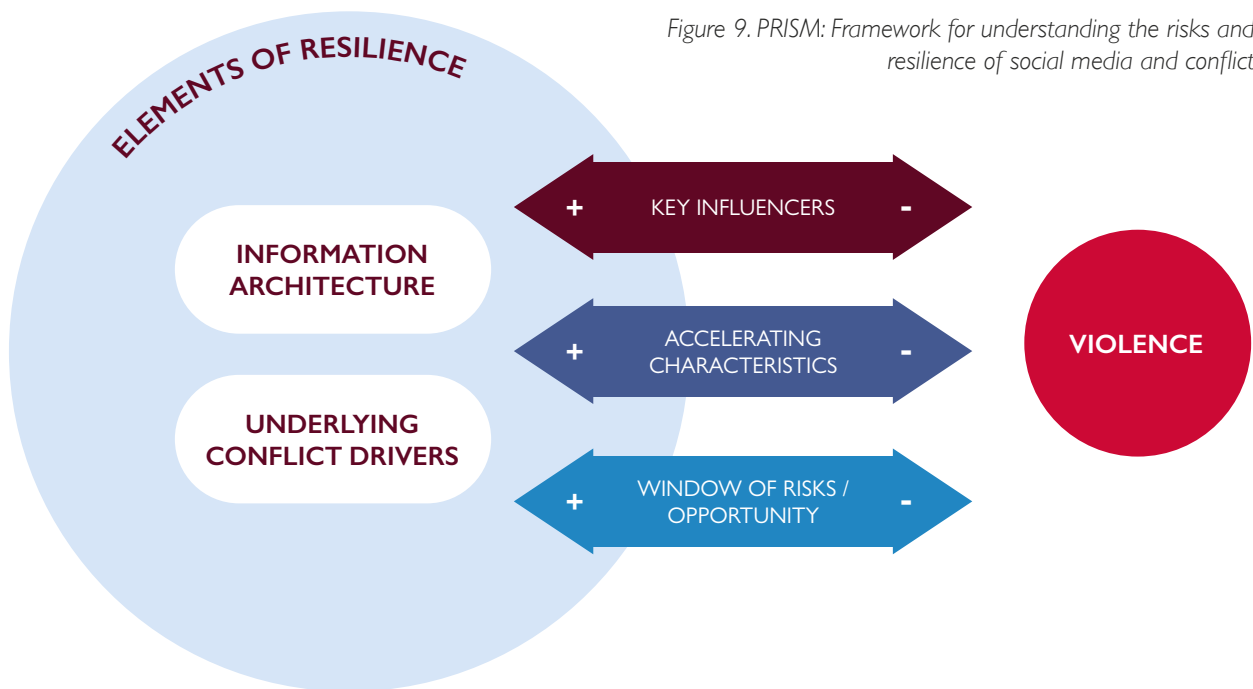


Figure 9. PRISM: Framework for understanding the risks and resilience of social media and conflict

38 Mercy Corps, "PRISM: Peace and Resilience on social media - A multi-factor lens for understanding concepts, assessing risks, and developing responses to the weaponization of social media", 2021.

INFORMATION ECOSYSTEM APPROACHES

Information Ecosystem Approaches focus on understanding and influencing the information ecosystem, including media and community engagement. These approaches are crucial for understanding the flow and impact of information. While they may face challenges in rapid implementation and adaptability in diverse conflict scenarios, they offer valuable opportunities to explore preventative measures. The examples below address media dynamics and the concept of information crises.

9. Information Ecosystem Framework³⁹

The *Internews Information Ecosystem Analysis Framework* is designed to understand the dynamics of information flow within communities, focusing on how people find, share, value, and trust information. Initially created to assess resilience to disasters, it is versatile enough to be applied to any setting that centers on information exchange. The framework underpins the Information Ecosystem Assessment (IEA), which maps the relationship between information supply and demand using a multi-phase, human-centered approach. IEAs evaluate the reach, content, and quality of media, as well as the infrastructural and regulatory environment in which media outlets operate.

The IEAs conducted by Internews explore the supply side of information by assessing the reach, content, and capacities of media outlets, as well as the business and legal context in which they operate. On the demand side, Internews collaborates with communities to perform field research that investigates how information is accessed, trusted, and used by local populations. The qualitative research employs methods such as workshops, observations, questionnaires, and interviews to gather comprehensive insights into the community's behavior.

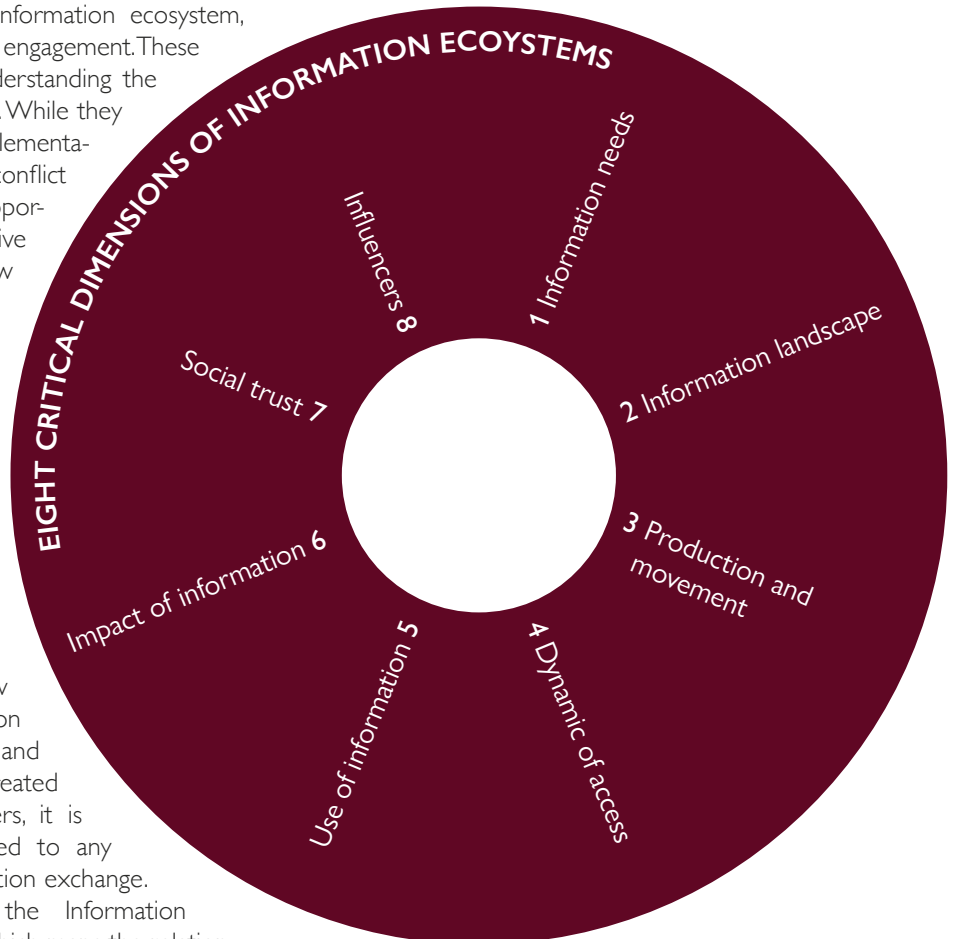


Figure 10. Internews: Eight critical dimensions of information ecosystems

The findings from IEAs guide Internews in developing tailored programs that address information disparities, enhance media literacy, and support the growth of local media and journalists. This holistic understanding of the information ecosystem enables organizations to identify and address gaps in the media landscape, improve media penetration and usage, and understand media-related behaviors, including the consumption of information from informal and non-media sources.

³⁹ Internews, "Mapping information ecosystem to support resilience", 2017.

Additionally, the Information Ecosystem Framework extends beyond analysis to include predictive modelling for issues like misinformation, disinformation and hate speech (MDH). By monitoring changes within the information ecosystem over time, the framework can link shifts to specific interventions, enabling impact evaluations. This approach reinforces the idea that credible information providers should foster critical engagement, rather than seeking unquestioning trust, and remain accountable to their audiences.

Creating and disseminating reliable and relevant local information is only effective if communities deem the information trustworthy. In 2023 Internews developed the *Trust Framework*,⁴⁰ which assesses the level of trust that people have in information sources and explores the reasons behind varying degrees of trustworthiness. The framework breaks trust down into four key elements, each with three components, providing organizations with a tool to assess, foster, enhance and monitor trust in information.

These frameworks can be valuable in conflict situations, where they may require a strong or connected on the ground presence. They are particularly suited for long-term protracted conflicts and can strengthen the localization agenda. These approaches, however, are costly and require extensive work with large teams. As with previous frameworks, a tension between resources and effectiveness persists.⁴¹

10. Framework for Information Incidents⁴²

Since 2020, Full Fact has worked with various stakeholders to develop the *Framework for Information Incidents*, designed to identify and respond to misinformation crises effectively. This tool helps actors recognize signs of an impending information crisis and coordinate an appropriate response. Full Fact defines an information incident as a surge of inaccurate or misleading claims affecting public perception or behavior regarding a specific event. The framework evaluates the severity of

such incidents, identifies challenges, and guides collaborative responses proportionate to the situation.

The Framework for Information Incidents is structured to support cooperation among diverse groups, including technology companies, governments, civil society, and the media. It operates on a voluntary and open basis, offering a flexible tool to address the evolving nature of misinformation. Full Fact identifies eight types of events, such as human rights abuses, violence, political or cultural events, and health emergencies, that may trigger significant information incidents requiring coordinated action beyond standard procedures.

Full Fact's framework categorizes information incidents into five severity levels. Level 1 represents normal conditions with minimal misinformation, while Level 5 denotes a severe, rare incident requiring maximum cooperation and response. Each level has specific recommended actions and collaborative efforts, ranging from long-term resilience building at Level 1 to rapid, substantial interventions at higher levels as the situation escalates.

Full Fact encourages organizations to set specific, measurable goals, either independently or in collaboration with others. Objectives include building audience resilience, communicating and debunking misinformation, contextualizing information with alternative sources, and creating systems for evaluation and accountability. Additionally, goals encompass disseminating accurate information, coordinating with other actors, pre-empting predictable misinformation, and preserving spaces for open dialogue.

While the framework provides a structured approach to combating information incidents, it has a top-down nature with limited community involvement beyond passive recipients. However, Full Fact offers a five-step process and [template worksheets](#) for implementing the framework, demonstrating a commitment to operationalizing the model for field use.

40 Internews, "The Trust Framework", 2023.

41 Internews also developed a "Managing Misinformation in a Humanitarian Context – Internews Rumour Tracking Methodology" in 2021. The guide does not provide a specific framework for understanding MDH, but rather present a comprehensive step-by-step guidance on how to set up a rumour tracking system. In the same way the CDAC network has developed a similar guide, "Rumour has it", in 2017.

42 Full Fact, "Framework for Information Incidents", 2020.

CONCLUSIONS

In the world of information where truth and deception intertwine, organizations like Mercy Corps, Internews and Full Fact and institutions like the European Union and the United Nations have developed their own tools and perspectives to tackle the growing challenge of MDH.

These actors, though varied in their methods, agree on several foundational strategies. They each deploy an analytical approach, meticulously deconstructing the information landscape to identify the agents of misinformation, the nature of their deceptive content, and the contexts in which these falsehoods spread.

They have created multi-level severity assessments to gauge the urgency and gravity of information incidents, ensuring that responses are appropriately scaled. Additionally, they recognize the importance of collaboration, advocating for a united front among governments, tech companies, civil society, and humanitarian organizations.

However, their approaches differ in scope and depth. For example, Mercy Corps examines digital footprints linking online activity to real-world conflict, identifying

risk factors and resilience points. Internews takes a broader view, assessing the overall health of information ecosystems by evaluating both supply and demand. The EU focuses on policy, aiming to establish legislative and institutional countermeasures.

While Mercy Corps and Internews engage local communities to gather insights from those directly affected by MDH, Full Fact employs a more top-down model, viewing communities as recipients rather than active participants. This highlights a critical debate in addressing MDH: the role of affected communities in shaping effective responses.

As MDH continues to evolve, analyzing these frameworks helps identify emerging patterns in how they describe and address the issue. Figure 11 attempts to summarize these patterns:

In the complex landscape of information, stakeholders responding to conflicts from Ukraine to Gaza are striving to identify patterns within the chaos. Although their approaches vary in complexity—ranging from three to seven components—all of them focus on five key pillars: the substance of the message, the channels

MISINFORMATION, DISINFORMATION AND HATE SPEECH

COMPONENTS	PHASES	HARM
Message / content	Creation	Typology
Medium	Production	Enablers
Audience	Distribution	Risk / likelihood
Speaker / actor / agent	Use	
Degree / effect		

Figure 11. Emerging patterns in the way existing frameworks describe and analyse MDH

through which it travels, the audience it reaches, the originators of the narrative, and the ripples of impact it leaves in its wake. These pillars serve as beacons, guiding organizations through the murky waters of MDH as they strive to comprehend its nature and recognize its silhouette amidst digital noise.

This categorization is not merely academic—it serves as a guide for action. It informs strategic choices, lending clarity to the response design, particularly in prioritization. For instance, engaging with specific influencers and key actors in the targeted community may prove more feasible than addressing all of the misinformation and disinformation available out there on a given topic.

Yet, the journey through the phases of MDH demands a shift in stance—from the reactive posture of the present to a more upright, anticipatory posture. The goal is not just to respond but to prepare, map potential digital threats, and to support local resilience.

Amidst the cacophony of information that AI and social media amplify, discerning what constitutes genuine harm becomes increasingly crucial. Not all echoes in the digital chamber warrant a response; for humanitarian organizations, the challenge is to sieve through the noise and act upon what truly matters, fulfilling their mandate of protection.

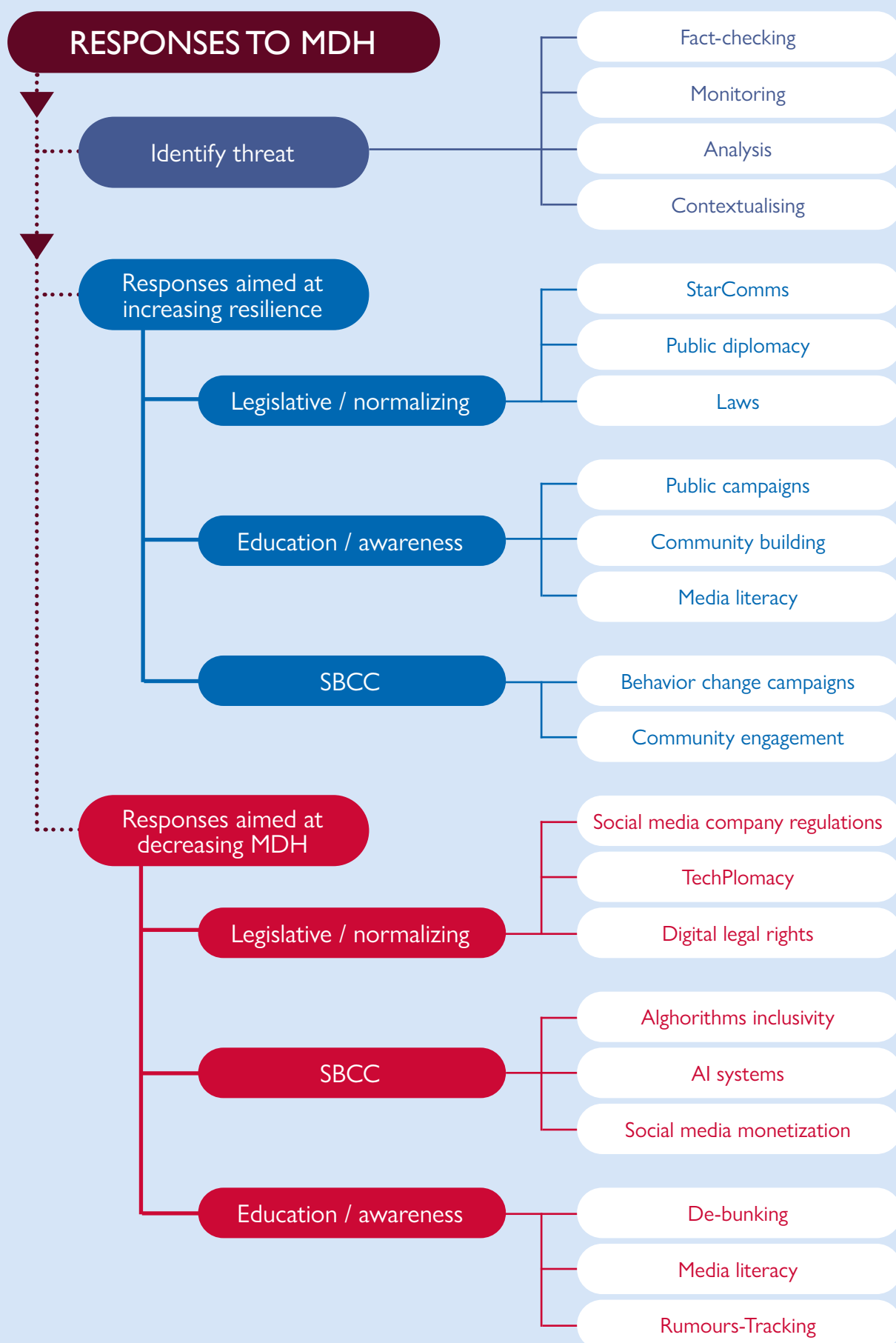
From these diverse frameworks emerges a taxonomy of activities for grappling with MDH—a repertoire of tactics, ranging from bolstering digital literacy to crafting counter-narratives, all devised to address MDH (see Figure 12). These tactics are employed in various ways depending on their mandate, to look at how to address MDH. Almost all of them are applicable in conflict settings.

While responses differ, they tend to be heavily contextualized to both the situation in the country/emergency and to the mandate and mission of the organization implementing them. The emerging approach is holistic, from a theoretical perspective. However, gaps and challenges persist, as described in the next section.

“

Amidst the cacophony of information that AI and social media amplify, discerning what constitutes genuine harm becomes increasingly crucial ... For humanitarian organizations, the challenge is to sieve through the noise and act upon what truly matters, fulfilling their mandate of protection.

Figure 12. Emerging taxonomy of activities designed to address MDH



Gaps in the existing approaches

The samples described above are not exhaustive of the wealth of material available on MDH. Nonetheless they have been selected to illustrate the complexity and multifaceted nature of the MDH phenomenon.⁴³

In conflict settings, MDH is increasingly dangerous, as humanitarian organizations often lack direct access to affected communities and therefore may not know what is happening on the ground.⁴⁴ Additionally, the sudden availability of AI and LLM technologies has extended the ability to produce sophisticated MDH material for online consumption to everyone.⁴⁵

These changes in the ecosystem have hindered efforts to establish a unified framework for understanding, responding to, and evaluating MDH in humanitarian crisis. The approaches analyzed above highlight both the uncertainty of our response, with multiple focuses and lenses to look at MDH, and the common challenges and gaps that we still must tackle and address.

- A. Measuring impact:** Despite the sophistication of various frameworks addressing MDH, a significant gap exists in their ability to measure impact. This limitation arises from the multifaceted nature of MDH, where numerous independent variables outpace dependent ones, making organizations feel like minor players in a vast information landscape. While acknowledging the myriad factors influencing MDH is critical, developing robust evaluation systems is equally important. Without clear metrics to gauge the impact of interventions, justifying and optimizing efforts against MDH becomes challenging.
- B. Bridging theory and practice:** Many frameworks, while theoretically sound, struggle with scalability and adaptability, particularly in diverse humanitarian contexts. Theoretical models, such as the ABCD frameworks, provide valuable insights into understanding MDH, but their practical application, especially in humanitarian emergencies and conflict zones, is often constrained by limited resources and capacity. These frameworks frequently remain underutilized in practice due to the immediate demands and pressures of conflict settings, where organizations struggle with the requisite time, skills, and internal capacity for thorough analysis.
- C. Reactive vs. proactive responses:** Most analyzed frameworks predominantly suggest reactive strategies, where organizations respond to MDH incidents post-occurrence. This reactive approach often relegates the response to an emergency mode, constrained by time and resources. Although some frameworks address building resilience, there is a noticeable tendency toward reactionary measures. This highlights the need for more proactive and anticipatory strategies.
- D. Top-down approaches:** The frameworks predominantly use a top-down approach, emphasizing the roles of organizations, governments, and social media companies. Often, these models focus on organized MDH campaigns led by state or non-state actors. However, in many conflict scenarios, MDH incidents result from complex emotional, psychological, and social dynamics. A top-down approach may overlook these grassroots-level factors, limiting its effectiveness in community-centric contexts.
- E. Humanitarian mandate:** The frameworks primarily address the impact of MDH on organizations rather than affected communities. There is a significant gap in a consolidated taxonomy of harm that links community risks with the humanitarian protection mandate. Without clearly defining the humanitarian role in addressing MDH, there's a risk of overlooking community-centric risks and protection, focusing mainly on organizational challenges and reputation.
- F. Innovation in addressing MDH:** The reviewed frameworks show a notable lack of innovative approaches to MDH. The methodologies and strategies suggested exhibit minimal variation and tend to align closely with organizations' existing mandates and operational models. This raises concerns about the capacity of current frameworks to introduce truly innovative solutions for MDH in conflict settings.
- G. Complementary approaches:** Although the diversity of frameworks addressing different facets of MDH is beneficial, their lack of interconnectedness is a limitation. The tendency for frameworks to operate in silos, focusing on specific areas like policy,

43 Geneva Academy, "Protecting the global information space in times of armed conflict", 2022; Global Partners Digital, "How can we tackle disinformation in a way that respects human rights?", 2019.

44 Irene Khan, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, "Disinformation and freedom of opinion and expression during armed conflicts", Aug. 12, 2022.

45 RAND Europe, "Human-machine detection of online-based malign information", 2020.

media, or behavioral change, which can hinder a coordinated, holistic approach. Most frameworks operate in isolation, focusing on specific aspects of MDH without integrating them into a cohesive whole. For instance, strategic communication approaches may not adequately incorporate the rapid technological advancements addressed in the ABCD frameworks, leading to a disjointed understanding and response to MDH. The increasing complexity of MDH requires more integrated and mutually reinforcing strategies.

H. Evaluating the effectiveness of proposed approaches:

There is a notable shortage of empirical evidence supporting the effectiveness of the strategies proposed in these frameworks. Commonly advocated responses, such as fact-checking and monitoring, while integral, lack sufficient research to validate their universal applicability in MDH scenarios. Additionally, the frameworks that delve into detailed analyses of actors' intentions and capabilities often fail to connect these insights with the broader echo chambers that enable MDH to proliferate. The effectiveness of approaches like the ABCD framework or the 4 i FACT model is not well documented, which hinders their refinement and adaptation based on proven successes or failures.

I. Local dynamics and community engagement:

While some frameworks emphasize local context (e.g., Information Ecosystem Approaches), there's often a gap in actively involving local communities in the development and execution of MDH response strategies. Except for the Defusing Hate one, few have been created in collaboration with affected communities. Local insights and engagement are crucial for tailoring responses to specific cultural and social dynamics, and neglecting them may undermine the effectiveness of response efforts.

J. Legal and ethical implications: Few frameworks adequately address the legal and ethical implications of countering MDH, especially concerning freedom of speech, privacy, and the potential for censorship. Balancing the need to combat MDH with respect for human rights remains a significant challenge, addressed by only a few organizations, such as Amnesty International and ICRC.

K. MDH and lack of trust: All of the frameworks analyzed above show an ecosystem of misinformation and disinformation that does not seem to acknowledge that humanitarian organizations themselves may be the cause of the spread of MDH. Issues such as lack of transparent communication, conflicting mandates, and failure to protect communities when needed can exacerbate distrust and reluctance to believe information from humanitarian organizations.

While existing frameworks provide valuable theoretical underpinnings for understanding and addressing MDH, there are significant gaps in their practical application, impact measurement, innovation, and adaptability to the nuanced realities of conflict settings. A more integrated, evidence-based, and proactive approach is essential for effectively countering MDH in humanitarian contexts.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

In this landscape analysis, we delve into the evolving dynamics of Misinformation, Disinformation, and Hate Speech (MDH) within humanitarian responses in conflict settings. Navigating this landscape requires continual adaptation, as humanitarian organizations actively engage in developing and refining systems to address this multifaceted challenge.

The urgency and complexity of MDH have been further underscored by recent conflicts, such as the Ukraine conflict in 2023⁴⁶ and ongoing war in the Gaza Strip. In these scenarios, it is possible to see a marked increase in the volume and sophistication of MDH, paralleling technological advancements in AI and the widespread accessibility of tools like ChatGPT.⁴⁷

However, the groundwork for addressing MDH in humanitarian contexts is not entirely new. Many organizations have laid a foundational framework through their ongoing work in digital protection, risk mitigation, and engagement. These efforts have progressively contributed to shaping current strategies and responses to MDH.

This landscape analysis aims to provide a detailed overview of the key players and their varied approaches within the humanitarian community regarding MDH. This includes an exploration of how organizations are innovatively tackling MDH, the specific strategies they are employing, and the impact of these efforts. The analysis also presents a broad perspective on the donor landscape in this domain, encompassing both innovation grants systems and the roles of major institutional and private donors.

In the concluding section, this analysis will highlight emerging gaps and challenges, identifying areas requiring further engagement and opportunities for future investment and innovation. This section aims to provide actionable insights for organizations aiming to enhance their impact in combating MDH in conflict and humanitarian settings.

The goal is to offer a comprehensive understanding of the current MDH scenario, providing valuable insights to effectively countering misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech in these complex environments.



Navigating the MDH landscape requires continual adaptation, as humanitarian organizations actively engage in developing and refining systems to address this multifaceted challenge.

46 See more here: S. Brown, MIT Sloan School of Management, "In Russia-Ukraine war, social media stokes ingenuity, disinformation", Apr. 6, 2022; E. Dreyfuss, et al., *The Media Manipulation Casebook*, "Viral Instances of Recontextualized Media in Russia's War on Ukraine", Mar. 2, 2022; J. Buchheim, & G. Abiri, *Verfassungsblog*, "The War in Ukraine, Fake News, and the Digital Epistemic Divide", May 12, 2022.

47 See also: RAND Europe, "Human-machine detection of online-based malign information", 2020.

IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATIONS

Civil Society

Due to time and resource constraints, this research can only provide a general overview into the diverse and multifaceted landscape of how small, local and/or national Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are addressing MDH in conflict.

Examining the distinct approaches of CSOs compared to International Humanitarian Organizations (IHOs) and United Nations (UN) agencies in addressing MDH in conflict settings is crucial for recognizing the varied but complementary roles these entities play in the broader ecosystem of MDH responses.

In general, CSOs are characterized by their grassroots orientation, exhibiting a profound connection with local communities. This proximity allows them to develop tailored responses that align closely with the specific needs and contexts of these communities. Unlike their larger counterparts, CSOs often operate with greater flexibility, allowing them to adapt swiftly to dynamic ground realities. This agility fosters innovation, as CSOs are more inclined to experiment with novel approaches and technologies to combat MDH.⁴⁸

Despite limited resources, CSOs create creative and cost-effective solutions, although their influence is usually localized. In terms of partnerships, CSOs frequently collaborate with other local entities, forming networks that are deeply embedded within the communities they serve. However, local and national CSOs are affected by conflict as well as everyone else in the country, and this may make it more challenging.

In contrast, IHOs and UN agencies follow a more standardized, top-down approach guided by global mandates and policies. Their strategies are designed for consistency and alignment with international norms. This framework, while ensuring uniformity, can sometimes limit rapid innovation and customization to local nuances.

CSOs, with their grassroots focus and innovative strategies, are adept at addressing localized challenges and specific community needs. Meanwhile, IHOs and

UN agencies leverage their structured approaches and global reach to implement large-scale interventions and influence policy.

Overall, CSOs play a critical role in responding to MDH, with their strategies reflecting the complex nature of MDH. Here there is a summary of the main trends noticed in the current landscape:⁴⁹

- **Community engagement and education:** CSOs often prioritize direct engagement with communities to educate them about MDH. This includes workshops, community meetings, and the distribution of educational materials to build resilience against misinformation.
- **Social media monitoring and response:** Many CSOs utilize digital tools to monitor social media for MDH, counteracting misinformation with fact-checking and the dissemination of accurate information. This activity is frequent, especially among organizations solely dedicated to monitoring.
- **Strategic communication (StratComms):** This involves crafting and disseminating messages that effectively counter MDH narratives, often tailored to specific audiences and local contexts.
- **Collaboration with fact-checking organizations:** CSOs partner with fact-checkers to validate information and provide credible counter-narratives to MDH. In particular, social media companies are increasingly working with local fact-checking organizations in different countries.
- **Advocacy and policy influence:** CSOs engage in advocacy to influence policies and regulations around MDH, pushing for more robust legal frameworks to combat hate speech and misinformation. For example, they have campaigned against Meta to address hate speech in Myanmar.
- **Local language content:** CSOs focus on content in local languages to effectively reach and educate the population. This is key in monitoring and assessment efforts.

48 See here as an example: Tristan Lee, "Identifying Suspicious Businesses, Reddit Analysis and Tracking Russian Propaganda: Here are the Results of Bellingcat's First Ever Hackathon - bellingcat", September 2022.

49 Most information in this section have been obtained through the key informants' interviews.

- **Collaboration with local media:** CSOs often partner with local media outlets to disseminate accurate information and counteract MDH.
- **Multi-platform engagement:** CSOs employ multifaceted approaches, utilizing a range of platforms (social media, radio, TV) to counteract MDH.
- **Community-based peacebuilding efforts:** CSOs link MDH to peace and reconciliation in conflict, implementing peacebuilding and reconciliation projects that address the roots of hate speech and misinformation.

Overall CSOs strategies are heavily reliant on understanding the local socio-political dynamics and leveraging community trust, as the evolving nature of the digital landscape necessitates continuous adaptation and innovation in these strategies.

The diverse approaches of CSOs, each with its strengths and limitations, underscore the multifaceted nature of combating MDH. A collaborative effort that combines the agility of CSOs and the wide-reaching capabilities of IHOs and UN agencies is essential for a comprehensive and effective response to MDH in conflict zones. This synergy is pivotal in navigating the complex landscape of misinformation and hate speech, ultimately fostering more resilient and informed communities.

International Humanitarian Organizations

Violent conflict is on the rise around the world, forcing record numbers of people to flee their homes, and increasingly, social media is fanning the flames. Political actors use social media campaigns to spread disinformation, echo chambers normalize hate speech against vulnerable groups, and radicalized narratives circulate in an instant.

Social media can be a powerful tool for social good, enabling awareness raising, organizing and mobilizing communities, and extending access to commerce, education and public health information.

Different humanitarian organizations have developed their own approaches to addressing MDH. The largest body of work related to the operationalization of MDH responses comes from media development organizations like Internews and the CDAC network, while the ICRC has focused on the implications of MDH in relation specifically to International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and International Human Rights Law (IHRL).

The first organization to start working on MDH, under a different terminology, was **Internews** during the response to the Ebola Outbreak in Liberia in 2014. After that the organization started replicating their rumors tracking methodology in other countries, including [Greece](#), [Haiti](#) and [Nepal](#). Eventually this became their standard Misinformation in Humanitarian Contexts Methodology,⁵⁰ or Rumors Tracking methodology, published in 2020. With this methodology Internews developed a system to create a community-based system to identify, track, monitor and respond to misinformation that may affect communities in humanitarian settings.

At the same time, the **CDAC** network published Rumour Has it,⁵¹ a practice guide to working with rumors in humanitarian settings.

Similarly, the **International Rescue Committee** has been working on projects aimed at providing verified information to communities through projects like [SignPost](#) and [Refugee.info](#) since 2016. Although these projects were not initially designed specifically for conflict situations or for MDH, both could be adapted and expanded to be used in different contexts.

50 Internews, "Managing Misinformation in a Humanitarian Context - Rumor-Tracking Methodology", 2020.

51 CDAC, "Rumour Has it: a practice guide to working with rumours", 2017.

The **ICRC** began focusing on MDH in around 2019,⁵² emphasizing a collaborative process built on everyone's contribution within the sector. Since then, the ICRC has invested in research and human resources to specifically look at MDH.

The organization started with looking at [safeguarding humanitarian organizations from digital threats](#), and the specific connections between digital harm and IHL. This was done through [a series of symposiums, workshops and research papers](#) that placed ICRC at the forefront of the conversation about MDH in conflict settings. The organization also started to put attention on the digital risks for populations in armed conflict and on the issue of data protection related to the spread of harmful information.⁵³

In 2019, the **Mercy Corps** Peace & Conflict and T4D teams developed a practical guide titled Peace and Resilience in social media – PRISM,⁵⁴ which focuses on three key steps:

- Identifying major types of social media harm
- Assessing risk and resilience factors in contexts where social media drives conflict
- Designing practical and holistic responses to comprehensively address the risk and resilience factors

In the same year, Mercy Corps piloted [Yafe](#), a mobile app designed to help communities in Nigeria prevent the spread of hate speech online. The app enabled community leaders to identify and intercept hate speech and rumors that could potentially incite violence in their communities.

In 2020, Internews launched their [2025 Strategy](#), a universal framework to understand a community's unique information obstacles, challenges, and needs. Known as [Information Ecosystem Analysis](#), this framework examines the context, production, sharing, and impact of information, along with social factors, [such as trust and power dynamics, at play](#).

The approach Internews uses to look at MDH uses an information ecosystem perspective, a similar framework to the one developed by Mercy Corps in their Weaponization of Information framework.⁵⁵ It delves into various aspects of the information ecosystem, extending beyond the role of social media companies and AI and diving into the nuances of how information is produced, used, shared and distributed.

Other humanitarian organizations have taken a different approach to MDH, placing a strong emphasis on social listening, and on social media companies and their ability to control the narratives emerging from online social media activities. The goals of these organizations are often to strengthen channels to ensure a quick reaction in case of dangerous content, like taking down or demoting posts that are inaccurate or defamatory. Organizations that are looking into this approach also aim at advocating for the responsibility of big tech in fighting misinformation, and to address major problems like fraud and online impersonation at the expense of humanitarian organizations.

An example is **MSF**, which launched the [Tackling the information disorder](#) project in early 2020. The project gave birth to [MSF Listen](#), a global online platform where health misinformation and common rumors about MSF can be reported so that MSF staff can analyze and triage them in real-time from all MSF contexts. The [platform](#) acts as both an institutional memory with a response history, and a workflow, in which MSF staff can efficiently communicate about, and plan responses to, misinformation that blights their work.

In 2023, ICRC completed its work on MDH with the collective development of a response framework for humanitarian organizations to address harmful information in conflict settings. This response framework was designed and finalized with the involvement of a wide range of organizations, from UN agencies to CSOs, to academic institutions, to social media companies. The process culminated in a workshop in Geneva in December 2023 to discuss the nuances of the framework. The release of the final framework is expected in Fall 2024.⁵⁶

52 ICRC, "Harmful information, misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech in armed conflict and other situations of violence", Geneva 2019.

53 ICRC, "International humanitarian law and the challenges of contemporary armed conflicts: Recommitting to protection in armed conflict", November 2019; ICRC, "Symposium report: Digital risks in armed conflicts", 2020; ICRC, "International Review: Digital technologies and war", 2021; ICRC, "The Potential Human Cost of the Use of Weapons in Outer Space and the Protection Afforded by International Humanitarian Law", 2021.

54 Mercy Corps, "PRISM: Peace and Resilience on social media - A multi-factor lens for understanding concepts, assessing risks, and developing responses to the weaponization of social media", 2021.

55 Mercy Corps, "The weaponization of social media - How social media can spark violence and what can be done about it", 2019.

56 Key informant interviews. The final framework is entitled "Addressing Harmful Information in Conflict Settings: A Response Framework for Humanitarian Organizations".

The ICRC framework outlines a proposal for how humanitarian organizations can more systematically leverage their activities and operations to design a response to harmful information in situations of armed conflict through a conflict-specific lens within the limits of their roles and mandates. It emphasizes that responses must avoid amplifying harmful information and causing unintended harm, or further interfering with and manipulating people's beliefs and behaviors.

When it comes to the response to MDH, ICRC proposes what they call a 360 approach, involving a comprehensive, multidisciplinary and multistakeholder coordinated strategy to address the different manifestations of harmful information from various angles. Finally, ICRC also proposes a menu of the most relevant interventions to undertake, and stakeholders with whom to engage and, potentially, at times, collaborate.

This framework for understanding and responding to MDH in conflict settings emphasizes the need for context-specific, legally informed, ethical, and collaborative approaches. It acknowledges the complexities of linking online and offline aspects of harmful information and calls for a multidimensional strategy to protect civilians and humanitarian efforts effectively.

This framework is notable for its collaborative, multi-agency development approach that incorporates diverse perspectives. The framework is still in its infancy, but it can constitute a good base to start from for the development of more practical tools that support MDH responses in conflict settings.

When dealing with MDH, international organizations generally exhibit the following trends:⁵⁷

- Heavy focus on the impact of MDH on the organization's staff, activities and reputation
- Resources dedicated to capacity and skills development internally
- Tension between the communications department and operations on who deals with MDH and how
- Heavy reliance on the field for designing solutions or responses – or total control from HQ
- Challenges in defining what falls within the organization's mandate and what does not

United Nations Agencies and the EU

According to the United Nations, 'information integrity' refers to the accuracy, consistency, and reliability of information. It is threatened by disinformation, misinformation and hate speech. While there are no universally accepted meanings of these terms, United Nations entities have developed working definitions.⁵⁸

The Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression refers to disinformation as "false information that is disseminated intentionally to cause serious social harm".⁵⁹ Disinformation is described by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as false or misleading content that can cause specific harm, irrespective of motivations, awareness or behaviors.⁶⁰

The understanding of MDH as developed by the UN is based on the idea that digital platforms have brought many benefits, supporting communities in times of crisis, elevating marginalized voices and helping to mobilize global movements for racial justice and gender equality. These platforms assist the UN in engaging people worldwide to promote peace, dignity and human rights on a healthy planet. Yet these same platforms are misused to subvert science and spread disinformation and hate to billions of people, fueling conflict, threatening democracy and human rights, and undermining public health and climate action.⁶¹ Addressing this urgent global threat demands coordinated international efforts to make digital spaces safer and more inclusive while vigorously protecting human rights.

The UN developed a voluntary [Code of Conduct for Information Integrity on Digital Platforms](#), built upon the following principles:

- Commitment to information integrity
- Respect for human rights
- Support for independent media
- Increased transparency
- User empowerment
- Strengthened research and data access.
- Scaled up responses.
- Stronger disincentives
- Enhanced trust and safety

57 Key informant interviews

58 United Nations, "Information Integrity on Digital Platforms", Policy Brief 8, June 2023.

59 UNSG Report, "Countering disinformation for the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms", August 2022.

60 UNESCO, "Balancing Act: Countering Digital Disinformation While Respecting Freedom of Expression", 2020.

61 UNSG, "Information Integrity on Digital Platforms", 2023.

These principles are derived from the core ideas discussed in the policy brief *Our Common Agenda, Policy Brief 8, Information Integrity on Digital Platforms* published in June 2023 and align with the [Global Digital Compact](#).

The Code of Conduct was open to feedback until December 2023 and was expected to be released by the end of 2024. Member States will be invited to implement the Code of Conduct at the national level. Consultations will continue with stakeholders to further refine the Code of Conduct's content, and identify concrete methodologies to operationalize its principles.

Other UN agencies are beginning their work on MDH, while facing significant funding reductions. In a note published on March 2023, UNOCHA defined cyber threats as one of the most pressing issues facing the humanitarian sector today. Digital transformation, increasing dependence on information and communications technology, and the [prevalence of cyber threats](#) create a new array of risks for humanitarian agencies and the people they serve.

UN agencies use the term 'cyber threats' to describe "activities that occur at least in part within the cyber realm, utilizing and/or targeting information communications technologies to achieve an effect that is not authorized by the legitimate user of the data or the ICT and/or has a harmful intent or effect on the victim or victims". Similarly, UNOCHA describe 'cyber resilience' as an organization's [capacity to identify, prevent and detect cyber threats, and respond and recover](#).

According to these organizations, cyber threats comprise a variety of activities and behaviors that can be distinguished by the types of actors behind them and their motives, as well as the type of threat. Common vulnerabilities in the humanitarian sector include infrastructure flaws, inadequate basic cybersecurity and digital literacy, human error and the absence of coordinated approaches.

Given their specific mandate, the UN approach to MDH is strongly linked to humanitarians' ability to deliver assistance and protect affected populations. As MDH directly affects a number of key humanitarian programming areas, including protection, access, accountability to affected populations and communicating with communities, the UN perspective on the phenomenon is focused on organizational risks.

According to UNHCR the rise of MDH on digital platforms is causing real-world harm to the most vulnerable, especially refugees, displaced and stateless individuals. The organization formally recognizes that understanding, mitigating, and preventing these online harms are crucial to advancing [UNHCR objectives](#).

A report from the Innovation Service published in 2021 states: "As messaging apps are increasingly used by organizations like UNHCR to link with communities, these tools can also be weaponized into efficient delivery systems for MDH - regardless of UNHCR's own use of the same tools. UNHCR should see a direct and large-scale MDH attack that involves an attempt to impersonate UNHCR and/or UNHCR partners to intentionally harm PoCs as an inevitability."⁶²

In 2021, the organization launched their [Digital Innovation Strategy](#). Its first key action was to "address prioritized digital protection risks such as misinformation, disinformation and hate speech, through promoting the application of international protection principles with the private sector; increasing access to reliable online protection information for people on the move, and exploring opportunities to co-develop safe humanitarian digital spaces with the communities we serve."

While UNHCR is developing its framework for addressing and understanding MDH, the organization has already identified a series of offline harms deriving from MDH; harms that directly link to their mandate: xenophobia, racism, persecution, violence, killings, forced displacement, trafficking, exploitation, barriers to accessing rights and services, damaged reputation, erosion of trust and legitimacy, diminished ability to protect and support refugees, threat to the physical security of humanitarian workers, and decreased donor support. This initial taxonomy helps outline the boundaries for [developing resources to effectively respond to MDH](#).

UN peacekeeping operations are also grappling with the challenges of MDH, including false allegations that peacekeepers are trafficking weapons, supporting terrorists, and exploiting natural resources.⁶³

False information about UN peacekeepers is nothing new; rumors have long circulated in host communities deeply frustrated with ongoing insecurity despite years of foreign intervention. However, the scale and speed

62 Nathaniel A. Raymond, "Conceptualizing digital risks to Persons of Concern in the WhatsApp Era", April 2021.

63 A.Trithart, "Disinformation against Un peacekeeping Operations", November 2022.

at which false information now spreads, particularly through social media, are unprecedented. By feeding off long-standing public frustration and genuine instances of UN missteps or misconduct, this raft of anti-UN disinformation makes it harder for peacekeeping operations to implement their mandates and has put the safety of peacekeepers at risk.⁶⁴

Today, UN peacekeeping operations monitor disinformation as part of their broader efforts to assess the political and security environment. Missions' strategic communications sections monitor disinformation in traditional media and on social media, including with Talkwalker, an application that can provide daily reports on content mentioning the mission or other issues relevant to the mission mandate.

Public information officers in field offices monitor disinformation on the ground, including by engaging with communities and joining local WhatsApp groups. Missions' uniformed components, including military intelligence and information operations sections, monitor disinformation among the communities they interact with and on social media. Joint mission analysis centers not only monitor disinformation on social media but can also help missions understand who is behind it.⁶⁵

One limitation of these efforts is that most monitoring focuses on social media. Monitoring messaging platforms like WhatsApp is much more difficult and largely depends on local staff members being members of WhatsApp groups where misinformation is spreading. Monitoring local-language community radio stations is typically beyond the capacity of missions. One tool that could help monitor community radio is 'radio mining', recently piloted by MINUSMA, but this still requires careful consideration of data privacy and protection.⁶⁶

Some UN officials believe that tackling disinformation requires doctrinal change that would allow missions to wage information operations. Others strongly disagree, however, and it remains unclear whether missions could effectively carry out such operations.⁶⁷

The WHO uses the word 'infodemic' to describe an overload of information, including inaccurate or misleading details during disease outbreaks, which can lead to confusion and risky health behaviors.

Recognizing the detrimental impact of infodemics, WHO has integrated its strategy to combat MDH into the core of its public health response. This shift marked a pivotal moment in the organization's approach to health communication and public engagement, underlining the need for accurate, reliable, and timely dissemination of health information to combat the adverse effects of infodemics.

Currently the WHO is forming alliances across sectors, both within the UN and with tech companies, and it is [developing tools for managing infodemics](#), both presently and in the future. During the COVID-19 crisis, WHO collaborated with various organizations, including the UN, tech companies, media, and civil society, to address community information needs and extend the reach of health information. Collaborations with academia have also led to a [public health research agenda and training in infodemic management](#).

WHO acknowledges that more research is needed to understand the scale of infodemics and the effectiveness of current management strategies, leading to [the development of new tools](#).

Looking at the plethora of UN agencies, and making an artificial abstraction, we can identify the following trends:

- Heavy focus on social media companies
- Strong emphasis on the impact of MDH on organizations
- Significant efforts to create training materials for field staff
- Stock taking exercises to understand the magnitude of the problem
- Pilot projects to test solutions
- Emphasis on monitoring and debunking systems

Regarding European involvement in MDH, the most active actor has been the European Commission (EC), which, in 2018, published a [Code of Practice on Disinformation](#). In 2021, the EC published a dedicated [guidance document](#) addressing the shortcomings identified in the Commission's 2020 Assessment of the Code, incorporating lessons learned from the COVID-19 disinformation monitoring program. The Code provided a framework for a structured dialogue

64 Albert Trithart, "Disinformation against UN peacekeeping Operations", November 2022.

65 Agathe Sarfati, "New Technologies and the Protection of Civilians in UN Peace Operations", September 2023.

66 Stefan Lemm, "Data Privacy and Protection Assessments in Radio Mining," UN Office of Information and Communications Technology, April 12, 2021.

67 Albert Trithart, "Disinformation against UN peacekeeping Operations", November 2022.

between relevant stakeholders to ensure greater transparency and accountability of platforms' policies on disinformation.

In 2021, major online platforms, emerging and specialized platforms, advertising industry players, fact-checkers, research and civil society organizations delivered a [Strengthened Code of Practice on Disinformation](#) following the Commission's Guidance. This code sets out principles and commitments for online platforms and the advertising sector to counter the spread of disinformation online in the European Union, which signatories agreed to implement.⁶⁸ The strengthened Code of Practice contains 44 commitments and 128 specific measures.

Recently, the European Commission has developed several initiatives to tackle disinformation:

- the Communication on 'tackling online disinformation: a European approach' is a collection of tools to tackle the spread of disinformation and ensure the protection of EU values.
- the Action plan on disinformation aims to strengthen EU capability and cooperation in the fight against disinformation.
- the European Democracy Action Plan develops guidelines for obligations and accountability of online platforms in the fight against disinformation.
- the COVID-19 disinformation monitoring program, carried out by signatories of the Code of Practice, acted as a transparency measure to ensure online platforms' accountability in tackling disinformation.
- EDMO, which is an independent observatory bringing together fact-checkers and academic researchers with expertise in the field of online disinformation, social media platforms, journalist driven media and media literacy practitioners.



Digital platforms assist the UN in engaging people worldwide to promote peace, dignity and human rights on a healthy planet. Yet these same platforms are misused to subvert science and spread disinformation and hate to billions of people, fueling conflict, threatening democracy and human rights, and undermining public health and climate action.

⁶⁸ European Union, "Developing a handbook on good practice in countering disinformation at local and regional level", 2023.

DONORS LANDSCAPE

Government Donors

In recent years, various funders have been actively involved in supporting projects that address MDH. Here's a summary of their involvement:

ECHO

ECHO (European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations) has indirectly supported MDH initiatives addressing MDH in conflict-affected regions by funding community radio stations to broadcast accurate information and promote dialogue, facilitating media literacy workshops and training for journalists and community members, organizing reconciliation initiatives to reduce tensions and divisive narratives. ECHO has also provided MDH-specific funding through bilateral mechanisms to humanitarian organization as part of its digital strategy.

FCDO

In 2021, the UK Foreign Secretary announced £8 million in [new funding for BBC World Service projects](#) aimed at combating harmful disinformation and inaccurate reporting worldwide. FCDO has also launched the [Public Interest Media and Healthy Information Environments](#) (PIMHIE) program, inviting not-for-profit organizations to submit proposals aimed at supporting public interest media and healthy information environments in various countries (£1,000,000). The agency has provided MDH funding to humanitarian organizations, under different names, through a variety of mechanisms, including bilateral funding.

USAID

USAID funds various humanitarian organizations and initiatives aimed at countering misinformation and disinformation globally. It supports programs that promote media literacy, fact-checking, and the development of independent media.⁶⁹ Aside from bilateral funding, different mechanisms have been used to fund these projects:

- [USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Affairs \(BHA\)](#)

- [USAID's Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance \(DCHA\)](#)
- [USAID's Bureau for Resilience, Environment and Food Security \(REFS\)](#)
- [USAID's Centre of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance \(DRG Centre\)](#)

Government of Canada

The Government of Canada has funded projects related to misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech through various departments and units, each contributing to efforts to address these challenges in different ways:

- [Global Affairs Canada \(GAC\) - Peace and Stabilization Operations Program](#)
- [Department of Canadian Heritage - Digital Citizen Initiative](#)
- [Canadian International Development Agency \(CIDA\)](#)
- [Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council \(SSHRC\)](#)
- [The Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council \(NSERC\)](#)

SIDA

Although there is no public information about Sida's role as a donor specifically targeting MDH in humanitarian settings, under their work with [democracy, human rights and freedom of expression](#), Sida regularly funds projects related to countering misinformation and disinformation, both by supporting media and by supporting institutions and CSOs. Sida has supported various initiatives aimed at strengthening media literacy, fostering independent journalism, and promoting access to accurate information.

Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NMFA)

NMFA has funded various initiatives to combat misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech, employing diverse strategies and approaches. One key area of funding is media development, where the NMFA has supported projects aimed at [strengthening the capacity of journalists and media organizations](#).

⁶⁹ USAID has compiled a "Disinformation Primer" under its Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance sector, which aims to educate on disinformation culture and offer programmatic design options to combat it.

The European Union

The European Union has played a significant role in funding initiatives to combat MDH. For instance, it has provided financial support for the [Verify](#) tool, alongside other entities such as [UNDP](#), Ireland, Canada, and Iceland.

The primary mechanisms used to fund MDH responses include:

- [Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace \(IcSP\)](#)
- [European Neighbourhood Instrument \(ENI\)](#)
- [Horizon 2020](#)
- [European Endowment for Democracy \(EED\)](#)

Private Donors

Omidyar Network

Omidyar Network, known for its philanthropic investments, particularly in areas that promote democracy and governance, has been funding initiatives that address MDH. These initiatives are normally related to [support for local independent media and business models](#).

Open Society Foundations (OSF)

OSF combats MDH by bolstering independent media through grants for investigative reporting and fact-checking, promoting media literacy to empower individuals to critically evaluate information, and funding civil society initiatives to counter hate speech. OSF has documented [lessons learned](#) from this funding.

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has been actively funding projects aimed at combating misinformation, particularly in global health and development. Their support extends to [initiatives focused on fact-checking and media literacy](#).

Ford Foundation

The Ford Foundation has been a key supporter of global initiatives aimed at addressing MDH. Their funding prioritizes [projects that enhance media literacy, fact-checking, and digital literacy](#).

The Knight Foundation

The Knight Foundation has been a prominent supporter of [projects aimed at addressing misinformation and disinformation within the media landscape](#).

Democracy Fund

The Democracy Fund has been actively involved in supporting [projects aimed at addressing MDH](#) to protect the integrity of democratic processes and promote informed civic engagement.

Rita Allen Foundation

The Rita Allen Foundation has supported various initiatives aimed at addressing MDH to promote accurate information and counter harmful content.

Rockefeller Foundation

The Rockefeller Foundation, in collaboration with other philanthropies, launched [The Mercury Project](#) in 2021 with a \$10 million investment to combat mis- and disinformation affecting public health. This global initiative seeks to quantify the impacts of misinformation and develop tools to mitigate its effects.

It's worth noting that while these funders have broad interests in areas that often intersect with MDH, the specifics of their funding in this area are not always publicly detailed or may be part of larger thematic initiatives.

Innovation Funds

Based on this preliminary research, no dedicated MDH funding streams or mechanisms have been identified. This does not imply that there are no private or public funders for MDH work, but rather, when MDH projects are funded, they typically draw from existing general Innovation, Digital, Media and/or Humanitarian Funds.

The list below provides a preliminary overview of the Humanitarian and Innovation Funds currently available for organizations aiming to implement MDH projects in humanitarian crises, including in conflict.

Elrha Humanitarian Innovation Fund

Type of Mechanism: Pool Fund – application process

Description: The HIF is a global program leading on the development and testing of innovation in the humanitarian system. Established in 2011, it was the first of its kind: an independent, grant-making program open to the entire humanitarian community. It now leads the way in funding, supporting, and managing innovation at every stage of the innovation process.

UNICEF Innovation Fund

Type of Mechanism: The first stage of the Fund aims to churn out self-sustaining projects out of the current stack of innovation projects. Investments will be in the form of small grants first, followed by venture capital (VC) like equity investments.

Description: The UNICEF Innovation Fund is a vehicle modelled on the support and analysis approaches of successful venture investment structures, that will quickly assess, fund, and scale innovations, both internal to UNICEF and external, that work. This fund is a first-of-its kind experiment that UNICEF is undertaking to encourage innovations across the globe.

Deloitte Humanitarian Innovation Program

Type of Mechanism: Matching and co-creation fund

Description: Through the Deloitte Humanitarian Innovation Program, Deloitte member firms and humanitarian organizations co-create and implement solutions to the sector's most pressing challenges. Past projects have included scaling humanitarian response in times of crisis with Save the Children and strengthening humanitarian leadership with UNOCHA.

Google.org Impact Challenge

Type of Mechanism: Winning projects will be selected by the public and a panel of judges to each receive €500,000. All finalists will receive mentoring and technical support from Google and partners.

Description: The Google Impact Challenge travels to different regions, asking local nonprofits how they would use innovation to make a better world, and inviting the public to vote for the projects with the greatest impact potential. Impact challenges have been hosted in seven different countries to find and support the most innovative nonprofits who use technology to solve society's greatest problems.

Global Innovation Fund

Type of Mechanism: Grants and risk capital

Description: The Global Innovation Fund invests in social innovations that aim to improve the lives and opportunities of millions of people in the developing world. Through grants and risk capital, they support breakthrough solutions to global development challenges from social enterprises, for-profit firms, non-profit organizations, international organizations, researchers, and government agencies.

MDIF Ventures

Type of Mechanism: MDIF Ventures is investing in a new cohort of media projects anywhere on the early-stage spectrum, from pre-seed through to participating in growth or Series A financing rounds.

Description: MDIF provides financing and strategic advice to media companies in countries where a free press is under threat, helping them to build commercially viable, self-sustaining businesses strong enough to protect their editorial freedom and drive change in their communities. Media companies should be located or serving audiences in countries where access to free and independent news and information is under threat.

Palladium Challenge Fund

Type of Mechanism: Grants

Description: The 2023 Palladium Challenge Fund: Technology for Humanitarian Action seeks proposals from organizations with innovative solutions to humanitarian crisis – unlocking the value of

technological innovation or scaling existing innovations. The fund looks for solutions that pilot new technologies and innovative approaches; de-risk start-up ventures targeting humanitarian response and/or address constraints in the humanitarian system; convene groups around innovation for humanitarian response; and scale existing innovations.

The current landscape of MDH in humanitarian settings presents significant challenges that necessitate coordinated and collaborative efforts. There is a substantial opportunity for donors to forge more effective partnerships, thereby enhancing the impact and reach of MDH response funding. By working together, donors can allocate resources efficiently, avoiding duplication of efforts and filling critical gaps in response mechanisms. Collaborative approaches enable a broader, more holistic understanding of MDH challenges, facilitating tailored responses that address both immediate needs and long-term solutions.

Potential forms of collaboration include joint funding mechanisms, shared research initiatives, and co-developed response frameworks. These partnerships can involve a wide range of stakeholders, including humanitarian organizations, local communities, tech companies, and policymakers, ensuring that interventions are contextually relevant and sustainable. Ultimately, collaborative donor efforts can significantly improve the effectiveness of humanitarian responses to MDH, fostering a safer, more informed, and resilient global community in the face of evolving digital threats.



The current landscape of MDH in humanitarian settings presents significant challenges that **necessitate coordinated and collaborative efforts**. There is a substantial opportunity for donors to forge more effective partnerships, thereby enhancing the impact and reach of MDH response funding.

CONCLUSIONS

This landscape analysis explores the complex and dynamic realm of MDH within humanitarian responses. The urgency of addressing MDH is underscored by recent global events, notably the Ukraine conflict in 2023 and the ongoing war in the Gaza Strip, where the prevalence and sophistication of MDH have increased alarmingly. This surge coincides with advancements in technology, including the widespread use of AI tools like ChatGPT.

Key humanitarian organizations are actively developing strategies to tackle MDH, focusing on digital protection, risk mitigation, and engagement. The analysis shows the diverse approaches employed by these organizations, their strategies, and the resulting impact, alongside an overview of the donor landscape.

While this research offers valuable insights, it does not claim to be over encompassing and exhaustive of what is happening in the landscape of MDH. Notably, very few local and national organizations were interviewed, reflecting a broader issue identified in this analysis: a lack of comprehensive knowledge about all ongoing efforts in this field.

Organizations working in conflict areas, such as Ukraine and Gaza, are often engaged in reactive/emergency-response based activities, leaving little time for long-term strategic planning.

However, in the last couple of years, there has been a shift, with more INGOs and UN agencies creating MDH-specific teams or projects. As highlighted above, almost all the organizations interviewed were working on training materials, development of standard operating procedures, playbooks and so on. Despite this progress, the premature development of training materials and tools without a clear scope of work may lead to future challenges.

This leads us to a recurring theme across the landscape analysis: the challenge of addressing MDH effectively within the specific mandates and operational capacities of humanitarian organizations. This includes navigating political sensitivities, resource constraints, technical overemphasis, and the need for global coordination. In

parallel, donors face similar issues in determining how best to allocate their funding.

One emerging issue on the overall current landscape, is that UN agencies and large INGOs often approach MDH phenomenon with a top-down response approach. Locally led and locally own systems are rare, and smaller local actors struggle to access and manage funding from larger institutions. Often, local actors are included in funding exclusively as local implementers of larger INGOs or UN agencies, with limited decision-making power. Despite this, all the KIs with INGOs and UN agencies recognized the importance of a multi-faceted approach balancing technical solutions with an understanding of social and cultural dynamics.

Below, we highlight the trends that have emerged in both the landscape analysis and previous desk review:

1. Understanding whether to intervene in response to MDH

Organizations are grappling with when to intervene in response to MDH, a challenging and critical first step. ICRC has developed the most up-to-date framework for responding to MDH based on the need for a response and the added value.⁷⁰ In the literature, very little can be found about this issue. As every organization has its own mandate, the ICRC framework is generally applicable, and must align with each organization's specific mandate. It is fundamental to ensure that MDH responses are integrated into the overall protection mandate of all humanitarian organizations.

2. Understanding the harm resulting from MDH

When it comes to understanding the specific harms caused by MDH to affected population, Mercy Corps⁷¹ and ICRC have developed the most comprehensive taxonomies. Having a clear and detailed taxonomy of harms is pivotal in supporting better coordination efforts at the field level, but also to understand mandates and develop responses. However, literature on this topic from the perspective of communities affected by MDH in conflicts is scarce.

⁷⁰ Framework to be published in Fall 2024.

⁷¹ Mercy Corps, "Social Media and conflict: understanding risks and resilience", 2021; Mercy Corps, "The weaponization of social media - How social media can spark violence and what can be done about it", 2019.

3. Understating MDH enablers ecosystem

Internews⁷² and Mercy Corps⁷³ seem to be the only two organizations examining what enables MDH to thrive in various situations. This contrasts with the approach of other organizations that focus primarily on technical responses to AI and MDH on social media. Understanding the ecosystem, however, is key for developing MDH responses that are proactive rather than reactive. Additionally, using an ecosystem lens may be helpful in trying to design more locally led solutions to MDH. UNHCR is also exploring MDH from an ecosystem lens, using the Internews methodology.⁷⁴ However, information ecosystem approaches are best suited for pre-emptive actions and preparatory actions rather than for emergency response. Additionally, in low-level conflicts and protracted conflicts, standardized approaches to MDH are needed.

4. Understanding the components of MDH

The ABCDE frameworks underpins nearly all theoretical approaches to analyzing MDH. Most organizations today use a combination of ABCDE approaches to examine different components of MDH. This detailed analysis is particularly useful for organizations seeking to determine whether they are dealing with misinformation or disinformation and for identifying possible State or NSAG coordinated attacks. However, this kind of analysis can be cumbersome and expensive, and it risks being problematic if conducted by organizations without the input of local communities. This aligns with observations made in KIs about organizations using the pretext of something being disinformation spread on purpose to attack them, when in fact it may well be that people are genuinely upset with that organization for genuine grievances. Analyzing MDH components like intent and deceptive behaviors is useful, but only if done properly and using a bottom-up approach.

5. Levels of MDH interventions

The 4 i Framework for Advancing Communication and Trust⁷⁵ is the most comprehensive document analyzed in this research for examining different levels of MDH interventions, alongside the ICRC framework. Even if they approach it slightly differently, both frameworks recognize that responses vary depending on the perspective from which MDH is viewed. This can include an institutional perspective, focusing on resources and policies; a community or individual perspective, emphasizing engagement and participation; and a global or country level perspective. Each one will require different approaches.

6. Steps to address MDH

Some of the frameworks analyzed both in the desk review and in the landscape analysis examine MDH in its different phases of creation, distribution, re-distribution and use. Rachel Brown, in *Defusing Hate*, looks at behaviors that, if changed, affect the spread of MDH positively or negatively.⁷⁶ The Information Disorder report by Claire Wardle and Hossein Derakhshan⁷⁷ identifies three phases: creation, production (and re-production) and distribution. Mercy Corps identifies four phases of the response: prevent, monitor, detect and assess threats, mitigate impact and build resilience. Internews addresses information production and distribution, habits and use.⁷⁸ These approaches help identify when to intervene and can serve as a foundation for preventive action.

7. Evaluating the risks posed by MDH

ICRC seem to be the leading organization in developing a robust system for ranking risks posed by MDH, using a method similar to the one developed by Rachel Brown⁷⁹ and Susan Benesch⁸⁰ in their *Dangerous Speech* methodologies. Humanitarian organizations generally seem

72 Framework not public.

73 Mercy Corps, "PRISM: Peace and Resilience on social media - A multi-factor lens for understanding concepts, assessing risks, and developing responses to the weaponization of social media", 2021.

74 UNHCR, "Understanding Information Ecosystems: Making it happen".

75 A. E. Sundelson, A. M. Jamison, N. Huhn, S. Pasquino and T. K. Sell, "Fighting the infodemic: the 4 i Framework for Advancing Communication and Trust", 2023.

76 R. Brown, "Defusing Hate: A Strategic Communication Guide to Counteract Dangerous Speech", 2017.

77 C. Wardle & H. Derakhshan, "Information disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policy making", Council of Europe report DGI (2017)09, September 27, 2017.

78 Mercy Corps, "PRISM: Peace and Resilience on social media - A multi-factor lens for understanding concepts, assessing risks, and developing responses to the weaponization of social media", 2021.

79 R. Brown, "Defusing Hate: A Strategic Communication Guide to Counteract Dangerous Speech", 2017.

80 S. Benesch, "Countering Dangerous Speech", Working paper, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2014.

better prepared to understand risks related to their organization, staff and operations rather than risks to the communities they serve. This is partly because risks are closely tied to local dynamics and culture, which are best understood by local community members. The ICRC framework is a good step in the right direction, particularly when used collaboratively with communities.

A similar and also useful framework for risks, is the Framework for Information Incidents, developed by Full Fact in 2020,⁸¹ which proposes a five-level system. This ranges from business as normal at Level 1, where some misinformation circulates in an open society, to Level 5, which represents a rare and critical situation requiring maximum cooperation and response. This framework is useful for assessing coordination efforts, and how MDH responses can be prioritized.

8. Looking at the goals of MDH responses

Among the frameworks for MDH responses, the most developed are the ones created by the Holocaust Museum, Mercy Corps, Internews and Full Fact. These frameworks generally share a dual goal for MDH responses: to increase resilience and decrease vulnerabilities.

In *Balancing Act: Countering Digital Disinformation While Respecting Freedom of Expression*,⁸² the organization identifies eight categories of events or situations that might trigger information incidents that require responses above and beyond 'business as normal'. Internews examines factors such as media independence, and their ability to report impartially, institutional framework for freedom of speech and characteristics of a healthy information ecosystem. The Mercy Corps framework⁸³ speaks about reducing the weaponization of information and enhancing the local population's ability to resist MDH narratives.

However, in practice, many organizations, aside from the one mentioned here, do not follow these response frameworks. Instead, they often rely on the experiences of their field teams and attempt to learn from those practices.

9. Specific activities to respond to MDH

Several frameworks analyzed here provide different lists of possible activities that can be used to combat MDH. The emerging pattern from the desk review indicates that most listed activities are also being implemented on the ground by different organizations, with some exceptions.

Generally speaking, the activities identified in this landscape analysis to respond to MDH can be categorized into three main areas:

- Ways to detect, identify and assess MDH
- Responses aimed at increasing resilience
- Responses aimed at decreasing MDH

On the identification and detection of MDH, many organizations, often in collaboration with local partners, engage in fact-checking activities. Social media and media monitoring are also commonly practiced, especially by media development organizations. However, analysis and contextualization remain challenging, with organizations struggling to develop systematic approaches to understand and anticipate MDH and its consequences.

Responses aimed at increasing resilience are typically addressed at two levels of society: the institutional level and the community/individual level. These efforts include working with governments and national institutions to improve internal and international MDH regulation systems, and with communities and individuals to enhance their ability to recognize and understand MDH before reacting to it.

Finally, MDH responses aim at decreasing focus on both the production and distribution of MDH and the role of social media and tech companies. They also address the vulnerability of affected populations to MDH by providing them with verified and reliable information/content.

81 Full Fact, "Framework for Information Incidents", 2020.

82 UNESCO, "Balancing Act: Countering Digital Disinformation While Respecting Freedom of Expression", 2020.

83 Mercy Corps, "The weaponization of social media - How social media can spark violence and what can be done about it", 2019.

Operational challenges

Based on the desk review and landscape analysis of MDH responses by implementing organizations and donors in conflict settings, several gaps and challenges have been identified. While some of these challenges will likely persist, others are being addressed in different ways.

Table 2 summarizes the challenges, gaps and opportunities highlighted in this landscape analysis and proposes possible partners to help realize these opportunities.

Table 2. Emerging challenges, gaps and opportunities in addressing MDH

Challenge	Opportunity	Possible partners	Status
Lack of accessible, user friendly resources for on-the-ground humanitarian workers in MDH response.	Creation of comprehensive operational tools and resources that provide practical guidance.	Tech companies, academic institutions, local NGOs.	This seems to be in development within each organization. Shared global level guidelines would be helpful.
Limited methods to measure the effectiveness and impact of MDH interventions.	Develop robust impact evaluation frameworks to assess MDH strategy success.	Research organizations, universities, data analytics firms.	No organization is currently working on this issue, but there is a general recognition that this is need.
Fragmented funding efforts leading to inefficiencies in MDH initiatives.	Create a coordinated funding approach for aligning donor efforts.	International donor agencies, government bodies, private sector donors, funding consortiums.	No donor seems to have expressed any interest in taking the lead on this.
Disconnected efforts among stakeholders in conflict areas leading to disjointed MDH responses.	Leverage on existing collaborative platforms for local level MDH response coordination.	Local NGOs, community leaders, international humanitarian organizations, local government bodies.	CDAC and UNOCHA seem to be the two most likely actors to do this at the global level, but neither of them currently has secured funding for this task.
Limited data sharing between organizations, restricting understanding of MDH.	Develop secure, ethical data sharing agreements and platforms among stakeholders.	Data protection agencies, legal experts, humanitarian organizations, tech companies.	Some work has been done by ICRC on data privacy, and the current work being done by UNHCR and WFP on data sharing agreements for registration data may be re-purposed for this.
Inadequate collaboration between humanitarian agencies and social media platforms.	Establish ongoing partnerships/referral pathways with social media companies for joint MDH initiatives.	Major social media platforms, digital rights organizations, tech policy experts.	Several UN agencies and the ICRC are actively engaging with Social Media companies, but this is not happening as a coordinated effort.
Over emphasis on Social Media platforms.	Create a strong system to respond to MDH that can be used and applied regardless of the social media/Tech being used.	International humanitarian organizations, digital rights organizations, tech policy experts.	The ICRC framework is a good step in that direction.
Inconsistent or absent regulatory frameworks and national policies on MDH.	Advocate for development of comprehensive government policies and regulations on MDH.	Government bodies, policy think tanks, international legal experts, civil society organizations.	UN and civil society organizations are actively working on this. ICRC is working on this from the point of view of IHL.

Challenge	Opportunity	Possible partners	Status
Overemphasis on technical solutions to MDH, neglecting social and cultural aspects.	Shift focus towards social and behavioral change strategies in MDH interventions, or at least achievement of a 50-50 balance.	Behavioral scientists, community engagement specialists, local cultural experts, educational institutions.	Often organizations focus on one or the other of these two aspects, while it is proven that a 360 approach is better suited.
Erosion of public trust and limited community engagement in combating MDH.	Develop strategies to rebuild trust and enhance community engagement in MDH initiatives.	Community-based organizations, trust-building experts, local media, advocacy groups.	The Internews trust network is a good start to measure Trust and therefore the impact of MDH on it. UNICEF community engagement impact indicators could also be adapted for MDH purposes.
Balancing fact-checking initiatives with strategic communication efforts.	Integrate fact-checking with strategic communication for comprehensive MDH response.	Fact-checking organizations, strategic communication experts, media houses, PR firms.	Aside from media development organizations like Internews and BBC Media Action, often fact-checking is the only response implemented by organizations.
Overweight on reactive responses vs. proactive or even preventative responses.	Create systems that look at triggers/enablers and vulnerabilities linked to the emergence of MDH in conflicts to develop system that can prevent MDH spread.	Behavioral scientists, community engagement specialists, local cultural experts, research institutions.	Aside from Internews and Mercy Corps, that provide some idea on what could be triggering and enabling factors, no other approaches have been identified that address proactive systems to respond to MDH.
Strong preferences for top-down approaches.	Create locally led systems that are designed and maintained by the communities themselves.	Community-based organizations, trust-building experts, local media, advocacy groups, local authorities.	Little is being done in that direction aside from CSOs and NGOs. Internews is a notable exception, as well as ICRC work in support of IFRC.
Balancing MDH risks related to the organization, with MDH risks posed to communities.	Create a framework for MDH responses that takes into consideration both aspects.	International humanitarian organizations, digital rights organizations, tech policy experts, digital security experts.	Most organizations are exclusively looking at MDH that affect them. Internews, on the other side, uses a response framework that focuses on the MDH effects on local communities.

Challenges related to MDH funding

Preliminary research indicates that the funding ecosystem for MDH is fragmented, as is the practice. No MDH-specific funding opportunities or mechanisms exist at the moment. Humanitarian organizations often use their own funding or apply for grants that include MDH in their broader objectives.

Media organizations like Internews, BBC Media Action, Foundation Hironnelle, and others, have secured funding over the years on media literacy, rumors, healthy information ecosystems and so on. Funding primarily comes from large institutional supporters like DFID (now FCDO), USAID and the European Union. In contrast, smaller private donors tend to fund MDH within thematic areas, like crisis communication, behavioral change, GBV, etc. These funds typically support community engagement and participation and are frequently used in collaboration with local organizations.

The largest pot of MDH funding comes from the innovation space, whereby flexible innovation grants enable the proposal and funding of MDH-specific projects. This is true for both large institutional funders (like BHA) and for smaller funding institutions (like Elrha).

However, there is a notable association between innovation and technology, with projects awarded under these grants involving the deployment of a technology. While technology can be beneficial in combating MDH, over-reliance on technology may not be sustainable or effective.

As technology changes and advances every day, the limitation of technology-based projects often become evident in a very short time frame, whereby certain technologies are replaced by better and faster ones in a matter of months. Additionally, associating MDH with technology solutions may place an unbalanced weight on the technical side of MDH, at the expense of the human side.

Insights from conversations had with both donors and recipients of MDH funding reveal several issues:

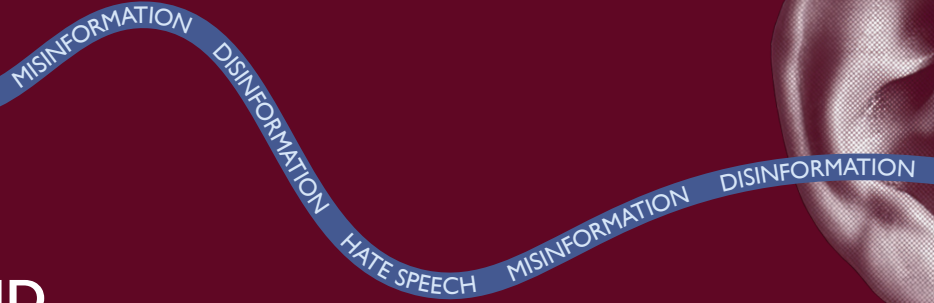
- There is an overfunding of projects associated with monitoring and detecting MDH, with less funding directed towards understanding the dynamics and harm on affected populations.
- Coordination among funders is problematic when it comes to allowing for complementary MDH responses. In some emergencies, there is a lack of funding altogether, while in others, multiple organizations receive funding for implementing the same activities, such as monitoring or fact-checking.
- Measuring impact is expensive and time consuming. Humanitarian organizations often lack the resources to evaluate the long-term results of their work, and if they do, they struggle to get the funding to measure impact properly.
- Participation and Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) are expensive. Since MDH relates to these two thematic issues, the lack of proper funding for issues related to AAP and participation makes MDH an after-thought issue, one that is addressed only when it is too late.
- There is a disproportionate allocation of funds to technology-based projects with less funding on combatting MDH offline.
- Current MDH responses are primarily reactive, with limited funding for proactive systems that would enable organizations to prevent MDH from affecting communities.

Every organization recognizes that MDH responses must be flexible, adaptive, and collaborative. However, outside of innovation funds, large institutional donors often do not incentivize flexibility and adaptability, and changes in strategies or activities may be viewed unfavorably by some donors.

**RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR DONORS AND
IMPLEMENTING
ORGANIZATIONS**

WHAT TO FUND

MISINFORMATION DISINFORMATION HATE SPEECH MISINFORMATION DISINFORMATION



1. Create a dedicated MDH portfolio approach

Establish a fund to support humanitarian organizations in addressing MDH responses in conflict settings. Within this, priority should be given to investing in diverse strategies to address MDH, recognizing that no single intervention is universally effective. When funding single interventions, favor those that integrate with an existing strong coordination system for MDH responses.

2. Set realistic expectations

Acknowledge that MDH is a complex issue deeply rooted in societal structures, requiring long term, sustained efforts. Investments should aim to mitigate MDH rather than eliminate, focusing on both supply and demand sides of the issue. It is not necessary for all MDH responses to address everything, but what is addressed needs to be clear and measurable.

3. Prioritize long-term structural reforms

Direct resources towards locally led, slow-moving efforts that can have the potential for broader impacts, such as enhancing the resilience of affected communities and supporting healthy information ecosystems. This also means allocating more resources to local organizations, local institutions, and local civil society organizations.

4. Look beyond digital platforms

While acknowledging the role of social media in amplifying MDH, also focus on the wider ecosystem, including the influence of traditional leaders and influencers, political narratives and trust and beliefs systems. Prioritize resources in projects and activities that tackle both online and offline aspects of MDH.

5. Acknowledge the political nature of MDH interventions

Be mindful of the political implications when countering MDH, especially campaigns created by organized actors (states or non-states). Ensure that implementing organization have carried out a robust risk assessment that includes the political consequences of MDH.

6. Invest in research and infrastructure for MDH

At this stage, many humanitarian organizations lack the infrastructure and systems to systematically respond to MDH. It is important to support foundational research and invest in data access, technology, human capital and organizational adaptation to improve MDH response capabilities.

7. Consider the impact of Generative AI with caution

Stay informed about AI developments, but remain focused on the multifaceted nature of MDH, which is influenced by a range of social and psychological factors beyond technology. Also remember that new technologies will emerge in the future, so your approach must be adaptable to any technology that arises.

WHAT TO FOCUS ON

1. Develop specialized training and resources

Fund the creation of accessible, user-friendly training materials and resources tailored for humanitarian workers on the ground. This may include practical guides on identifying, assessing, and responding to MDH, interactive online courses, and workshops tailored to local contexts and needs.

2. Support impact evaluation research

Invest in developing innovative methods to measure the effectiveness and impact of MDH interventions. This could involve funding longitudinal studies, leveraging data analytics, and pilot projects to create shared evaluation metrics across different contexts and interventions.

3. Foster collaborative funding models

Promote and facilitate collaborative funding efforts among donors to enhance efficiency and coordination in tackling MDH. This could be achieved through pooled funds, such as linking with the CHF or CERF, joint proposal calls, and shared assessment criteria for grant applications.

4. Enhance coordination and integration

Support platforms that facilitate collaboration and information sharing. Funding could help establish or strengthen networks that bring together humanitarian organizations, local communities, tech companies, and policymakers to foster integrated MDH responses.

5. Emphasize social and behavioural solutions

Complement technical solutions with social and behavioural approaches by funding initiatives that focus on community engagement, participation, and the promotion of critical thinking skills. Since MDH are often rooted in emotional and beliefs systems, they should be addressed as a relational problem rather than a technical one.

6. Rebuild trust and enhance community engagement

Invest in projects aimed at rebuilding public trust and enhancing community engagement in combating MDH. Funding should support community-led initiatives, locally led response systems and the development of reliable local information sources.

7. Promote proactive and preventative approaches

Fund the development of systems and tools that can detect early signs of MDH, allowing organizations to respond proactively rather than reactively. This includes funding for predictive analytics, early warning systems, and research into the drivers of MDH.

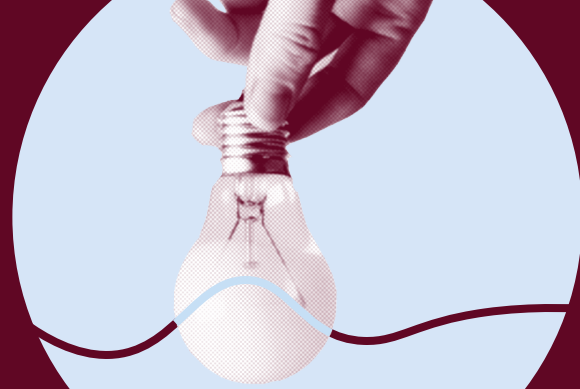
8. Support locally led approaches

Prioritize funding for locally led initiatives that empower communities to tackle MDH within their own contexts. This includes supporting projects that will be entirely managed and continued by local organizations and local actors.

9. Encourage a balanced risk management approach

Fund initiatives that address both the risks MDH poses to organizations and the potential harm to communities. This involves supporting risk assessment tools, training in risk management strategies, and projects designed to mitigate the impact of MDH on vulnerable populations.

INNOVATION FUNDING



1. Fund research and development

Support R&D projects that explore new methods, technologies, and strategies for identifying, monitoring, and countering MDH. Emphasis should be on projects that offer potential for scalability and replication across different contexts and settings.

2. Promote local solutions

Prioritize funding for local innovators and local organizations that understand the cultural and social nuances of their communities. Local solutions are more likely to be sustainable and effective in combating MDH.

3. Encourage collaborative innovation

Invest in platforms and initiatives that bring together technologists, researchers, humanitarian workers, and affected communities to co-create solutions. Collaboration can lead to more holistic and innovative approaches to MDH.

4. Support scalable and adaptable technologies

Focus on technologies that can be easily adapted to different contexts and scaled up. This includes AI and machine learning tools for real-time monitoring and analysis of MDH, as well as platforms that facilitate community engagement and resilience building.

5. Ensure ethical considerations

Ensure that innovations respect privacy, data protection, and ethical standards. Funders should require that projects include ethical impact assessments, particularly when deploying new technologies in conflict settings.

6. Invest in capacity building

Beyond funding specific projects, invest in strengthening the long-term capacity of organizations and communities to innovate in response to MDH. This includes promoting digital literacy, critical thinking, and the use of innovative tools and methods.

7. Measure impact

Require projects include mechanisms for measuring impact and learning. This will ensure that innovations address immediate needs and contribute to the broader knowledge base on effective MDH responses. Allocate sufficient funding for impact measurement based on project activities.

8. Support innovative solutions that are technology agnostic

Innovation is often associated with technology, but it does not have to be. Prioritize innovative solutions that are either technology agnostic, or that do have both a technology and an offline component to it.

9. Promote open innovation

Encourage the development of open-source tools and platforms for MDH response to allow wider adoption and adaptation. Sharing technology, knowledge, and skills with smaller local responders will help them lead effective responses.

10. Fund pilot projects

Allocate resources to pilot innovative approaches to MDH response, with clear criteria for scaling successful projects. While pilot projects are valuable for quickly testing and developing solutions, they should be paired with funding for replicability and scalability to ensure sustainability.

IMPACT MEASUREMENT

1. Define clear, context-specific objectives

Work with implementing partners to define precise, measurable objectives and impact for MDH interventions. These objectives should be tailored to the specific context of the conflict and the expected outcomes of the intervention.

2. Support mixed-methods evaluation approaches

Require implementing organizations to utilize both quantitative and qualitative methods to assess impact. Quantitative data can include metrics such as the reach of misinformation countermeasures or changes in audience perceptions measured through surveys. Qualitative insights can be gathered through interviews, focus groups, and case studies to understand the nuanced effects of interventions on community resilience against MDH.

3. Fund baseline and follow-up studies

Require that grantees conduct baseline assessments before interventions begin to establish a clear understanding of the MDH landscape. Fund follow-up studies can then measure changes over time, attributing shifts in the information ecosystem to specific interventions.

4. Leverage local partnerships for data collection

Prioritize funding for project that engage local organizations in the data collection process to ensure that the methods and metrics are culturally relevant and that data gathering respects local norms and sensitivities.

5. Focus on long-term impact

Encourage projects that aim for sustainable impact beyond immediate outcomes. This may involve supporting initiatives that build local capacities, rather than respond directly to MDH.

6. Use technology and innovation responsibly

While innovative technological solutions can be powerful tools against MDH, it's crucial to evaluate their ethical implications and potential unintended consequences. Donors should prioritize funding technologies that are transparent, accountable, and have undergone rigorous impact assessments.

7. Prioritize learning and adaptation

Fund projects that incorporate mechanisms for continuous learning and adaptation based on emerging findings from impact evaluations. This agile approach allows for the refinement of strategies in response to new insights or shifts in the MDH landscape.

8. Encourage collaboration and knowledge sharing

Foster collaborations among funded projects to facilitate the exchange of best practices, lessons learned, and methodologies for measuring impact. This can enhance the overall effectiveness of the donor's portfolio in addressing MDH.

9. Invest in capacity building for impact evaluation

Support training programs for project implementers on impact evaluation methodologies specific to MDH interventions. Building expertise within organizations can improve the quality of impact assessments and ensure that evaluations are conducted systematically and rigorously.

PRIORITIZATION OF FUNDING

Based on the desk review and landscape analysis, funders should be cautious about investing in initiatives that solely focus on reactive, short-term solutions without addressing the underlying causes of misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech (MDH). Specifically, **funding should be wary of:**

1. Over-reliance on technology-based solutions

While technology plays a crucial role in combating MDH, an exclusive focus on technological fixes can neglect the importance of human judgment, local context, and the need for holistic approaches that include media literacy, community engagement, and educational programs.

2. Singular focus on content removal or censorship

Efforts solely aimed at removing harmful content or demoting it can be counterproductive, potentially infringing on freedom of speech and failing to address the demand side of misinformation. Such approaches might also not be sustainable or effective in the long term.

3. Initiatives lacking local involvement and context-specific understanding

Projects designed without the active involvement of local communities, stakeholders, and an in-depth understanding of the cultural and political context may not be effective and could even exacerbate the issues they aim to resolve.

4. Short-term projects without a vision for sustainability

Funding short-lived projects without plans for sustainability or long-term impact assessment can lead to fragmented efforts and missed opportunities for building lasting solutions to combat MDH.

5. Projects duplicating existing efforts without coordination

Funding initiatives that replicate existing efforts without adequate coordination among stakeholders can lead to resource wastage and inefficiencies. So do project that are implemented in vacuum and without using the proper coordination systems.

6. Activities focusing on social media

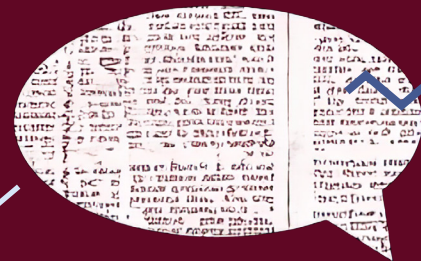
Allocating funds to projects that address MDH through social media only, does not build long-term solutions and it does not address the core causes of MDH. New social media systems and companies are emerging every day, which means that any MDH response based on a single social media company will be short lived.

7. Projects that advocate for more restrictive regulations

Using funding to advocate for and support the development of more restrictive regulatory frameworks and national policies on MDH can be highly risky in this context. This could involve inadvertently supporting censorship and creating a fertile ground for possible freedom of speech violations.

8. Projects that focus on fact-checking and monitoring

There is an overfunding of initiatives use combined fact-checking and monitoring to respond to MDH. It is not yet proven that fact-checking and monitoring actually have any impact on MDH, especially in conflict contexts. Additionally, if funded, these projects should always be implemented by local actors and not by international organizations.



ANNEX I. TERMS OF REFERENCE

This assignment aims to assess the current misinformation and disinformation landscape in humanitarian contexts, develop a framework on possible contributions of the humanitarian innovation community to counter misinformation and disinformation, and develop a measurement framework to guide the sector in measuring the impact of their innovation programming in this field.

Specific Objectives

Comprehensive Scoping Analysis:

Undertake an in-depth scoping analysis to identify prevailing models, tools, processes, and strategies employed to address misinformation and disinformation in humanitarian contexts. The analysis will offer insights into the existing landscape, guide the subsequent framework development and identify potential opportunities for investment and potential avenues for collaboration.

Development of a Guiding Framework:

Create a framework tailored to the humanitarian sector aimed at effectively countering the dissemination of misinformation and disinformation. This framework will provide a strategic blueprint to stakeholders in the humanitarian sector to guide their interventions and initiatives in the future.

Design of Impact Measurement Framework:

Develop a measurement framework designed to robustly assess the dis/misinformation interventions in fragile and conflict affected settings. This framework will facilitate the monitoring and evaluation of the impact of different interventions, enabling data-driven decision-making.

Strategic Scope Recommendation:

Recommend specific, actionable areas where Humanitarian Grand Challenges can strategically focus its efforts to address misinformation and disinformation.

Activities

Literature Review and Landscape Analysis:

Conduct a comprehensive review of existing literature, reports, and studies related to misinformation and disinformation in humanitarian contexts. Identify current models, tools, processes, approaches, and organizations that have been involved in countering misinforma-

tion and disinformation in humanitarian contexts. The literature review will provide a foundation for understanding the state of the field, highlighting good practice, and identifying gaps and opportunities for future investment where innovative solutions are needed.

Stakeholder Interviews and Surveys:

Engage with key stakeholders in the humanitarian innovation community, including researchers, practitioners, NGOs, private sector; and affected communities. Conduct interviews and surveys to gather insights into their experiences, challenges, and potential strategies for addressing MDH. These inputs will contribute to developing the framework of action.

Frameworks Development Workshops:

Organize workshops with experts from the humanitarian and communication sectors. Collaboratively develop a guiding framework that outlines strategies, methodologies, and best practices for countering misinformation and disinformation in humanitarian settings caused by conflict. The framework should consider the unique challenges and dynamics of conflict settings.

Case Study Analysis:

Select and analyze relevant case studies where misinformation and disinformation have impacted humanitarian efforts. Case studies will provide practical insights into real-world challenges faced and the effectiveness of different approaches. This analysis can inform the development of the framework.

Measurement Framework Design:

Collaboratively design a measurement framework that outlines key performance indicators (KPIs) to assess the impact of countering dis/misinformation initiatives. Define metrics to measure changes in information dissemination, awareness, behavior change, and effects of misinformation and disinformation reduction efforts. Include recommendations of relevant tools and appropriate M&E approaches to gather the data needed to report on the KPIs. This framework will help in evaluating the success of interventions.

Expert Consultation for Scope Recommendations:

Engage experts in the field of humanitarian innovation, and misinformation and disinformation reduction to review the guiding framework and measurement framework. Through consultations, refine and validate the recommendations. Seek their input on identifying

specific areas within the framework that align with the Creating Hope in Conflict program's goals and capabilities.

Report Compilation and Presentation:

Compile the findings, framework, measurement guidelines, and recommendations into separate documents, form a comprehensive package of outputs. Present the report to the HGC team and other interested partners and donors, highlighting the key findings, actionable insights, and potential avenues for collaboration. The report will serve as a guide for the program's future activities in countering misinformation and disinformation and as a set of public good documents for the humanitarian innovation sector.

It should be noted that each of these activities should be carried out in a collaborative and iterative manner, involving key stakeholders and experts to ensure the resulting frameworks and recommendations are well-informed and practical for implementation.

Deliverables

1. An inception report during the first two weeks after signing the contract to outline the process, timeline, outline of the other deliverables, proposed question guide, respondent list for the consultations and the list of potential annexes. This report will be discussed with the consultant in an inception meeting and will form the basis for the assignment.
2. Two drafts for feedback and a final version of the Comprehensive Scoping Analysis
3. Two drafts for feedback and a final version of the Guiding Framework
4. Two drafts for feedback and a final version of the Impact Measurement Framework
5. Two drafts for feedback and a final version of the Strategic Recommendations

Timeline and reporting

The assignment will begin on November 1, 2023, and will have to be completed by February 29, 2024. The consultant will report to the Director, Humanitarian Innovation or delegate.

ANNEX II. A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

As evident in the glossary at the beginning of this review, the issue of terminology has been one of the many challenges that humanitarian organizations are trying to address when facing misinformation and disinformation in conflict settings. Over time, different organizations have developed preferences to the terminology they use internally, and in their external communications. This is due mainly to the fact that different terms have different implications, some of which may not be appropriate for organizations that are created on the principles of impartiality, neutrality, and independence.⁸⁴

Humanitarian organizations have purposely not used terminology like “Fake news” and “Propaganda” because of their political implications. Historically, the term “propaganda” has been closely associated with political and ideological campaigns during and after the Cold War, especially during wartime or in authoritarian regimes. It implies a deliberate effort by governments or political groups to manipulate public opinion to serve specific political agendas⁸⁵.

More recently, “fake news” has become heavily politicized, particularly following its frequent use in global political discourse from 2017. It is often used to discredit media reports or political narratives that are unfavorable or critical of certain political entities or leaders. Using these terms might suggest that a humanitarian organization is taking sides in a political debate or conflict. The principles of neutrality and impartiality that guide these organizations mandate that they avoid any appearance of political bias.

In 2014 Susan Benesch creates the term “Dangerous speech”, to expand the narrow definition of Hate Speech and defined it as a type of speech that increases the risk for violence targeting certain people because of their membership in a group, such as an ethnic, religious, or racial group. It includes both speech that qualifies as incitement and speech that makes incitement possible by conditioning its audience to accept, condone, and commit violence against people who belong to a

targeted group⁸⁶.

According to Benesch definition, “dangerous speech” can take a variety of forms, such as an actual speech, a pamphlet, an online post, a video, an image or message on a T-shirt, or even a song. Its message may call for violence against a target group or may portray the target group in a way that makes violence against it seem reasonable, justified, and necessary. Dangerous speech often dehumanizes the group it targets (e.g., by calling its members rats, dogs, or lice), accuses the target group of planning to harm the audience, and presents the target group’s existence as a dire threat to the audience. Speech may be dangerous even if it isn’t intended to cause violence: for example, a false rumor that a rival group is planning to attack could make violence against the group’s members seem like justified self-defense⁸⁷.

Around 2015, organizations working specifically on information and operating in humanitarian contexts, like Internews⁸⁸ and the Communication with Disaster Affected Communities Network (CDAC), started using the term “Rumors” to indicate all unverified information that was rapidly passed on from one person to another⁸⁹. The Ebola response was the starting point of a conversation about misinformation and disinformation in health emergencies, and the impact of this phenomenon on the affected population and on humanitarian organizations, that culminated with the Covid19 response.

In this first terminology, the word “rumor” was used to indicate instances of misinformation and disinformation (which may or may not include hate speech). What distinguished them was the fact that the source of the information, and therefore the information’s credibility, was not possible to verify⁹⁰.

So far, this term is not contested by any organization particularly, but it is considered a temporary definition: once the rumor has been verified, we may end up with

84 ICRC, “Harmful information, misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech in armed conflict and other situations of violence”, Geneva 2019.

85 Claire Wardle and Hossein Derakhshan, “Information disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policy making”, Council of Europe report DGI(2017)09, September 27, 2017.

86 Susan Benesch, “Countering Dangerous Speech”, Working paper, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2014.

87 Susan Benesch, “Countering Dangerous Speech: New Ideas for Genocide Prevention”, *Voices that Poison*, 2014.

88 Internews, “Managing Misinformation in a Humanitarian Context - Rumor-Tracking Methodology”, 2020.

89 CDAC, “Rumour Has it: a practice guide to working with rumours”, 2017.

90 ICRC, “International humanitarian law and the challenges of contemporary armed conflicts: Recommitting to protection in armed conflict”, November 2019.

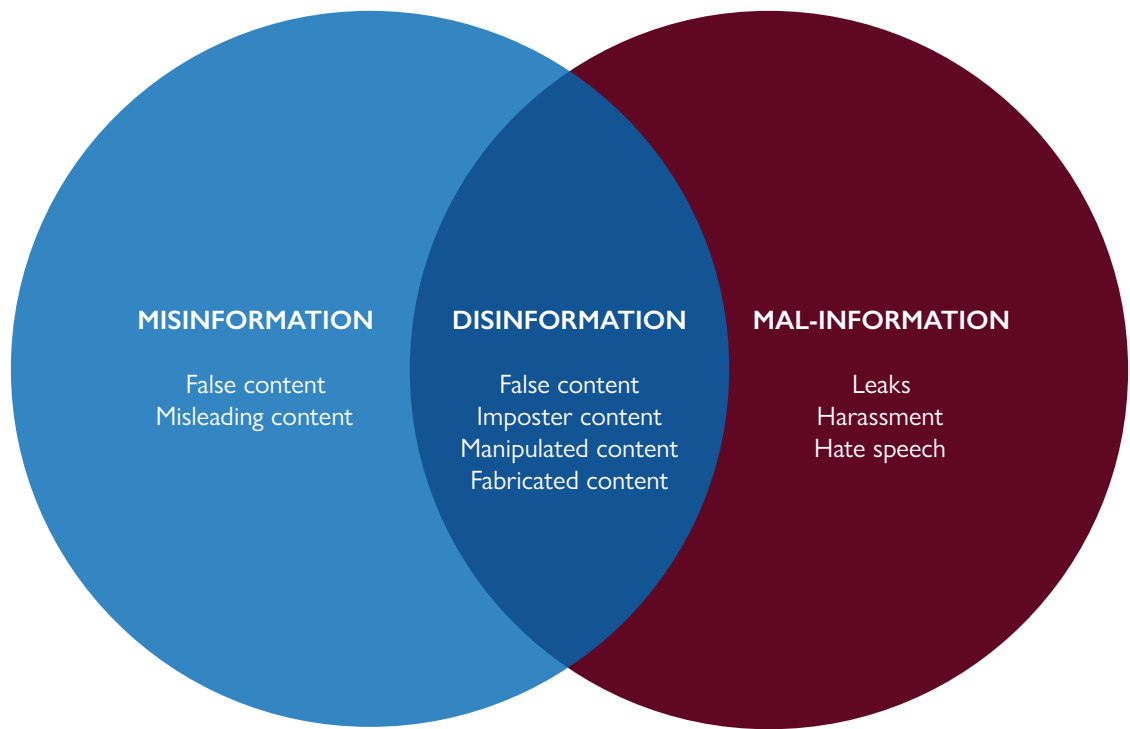


Figure 13. Information disorder: Taxonomy of MDH terms

a truthful, verified information, or with an actual misinformation or with a piece of disinformation.

The basic taxonomy that all organizations seem to agree on, even if not used fully, is the one designed by Claire Wardle and Hossein Derakhshan, in 2017 in the “Information disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policy making” report⁹¹, which is represented in Figure 13.

Using the dimensions of harm and falseness, the author of this paper describes the differences between these three types of information:

- Misinformation is when false information is shared, but no harm is meant.
- Dis-information is when false information is knowingly shared to cause harm.
- Mal-information is when genuine information is shared to cause harm, often by moving information designed to stay private into the public sphere.

In the same report the authors suggest the use of the following taxonomy:

1. **Information (or Influence) Operations:** Actions taken by governments or organized non-state actors to distort domestic or foreign political sentiment, most frequently to achieve a strategic

and/or geopolitical outcome. These operations can use a combination of methods, such as false news, dis-information or networks of fake accounts aimed at manipulating public opinion (false amplifiers).

2. **False News:** News articles that purport to be factual, but contain intentional misstatements of fact to arouse passions, attract viewership or deceive.
3. **False Amplifiers:** Coordinated activity by inauthentic accounts that has the intent of manipulating political discussion (e.g., by discouraging specific parties from participating in discussion or amplifying sensationalistic voices over others).

While the use of Information Operations is more frequent for humanitarian organizations, false news and false amplifiers have yet to be taken on, in the general glossary around this topic.

The term “Information Integrity” is increasingly used by various entities, including United Nations agencies, governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), media outlets, and tech companies, to refer to the broader challenge of addressing misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech.

Organizations like the United Nations (UN) use the term “information integrity” to encompass the challenges of misinformation, disinformation, and hate

91 Claire Wardle and Hossein Derakhshan, “Information disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policy making”, Council of Europe report DGI(2017)09, September 27, 2017.

speech within their broader mandates of peacekeeping, public health, and human rights. It is a term that aligns with their objectives of promoting accurate and reliable information in various global contexts⁹². Agencies like UNHCR use both “Information Integrity” and misinformation, disinformation and hate speech (MDH). Within this terminology, Information Integrity is what needs to be preserved from the possible risks posed by misinformation, disinformation and hate speech (MDH).

The first tentative to establish a specific taxonomy for humanitarian organizations on misinformation and disinformation in conflict settings was done by Mercy Corps in 2019. In this work, Mercy Corps decides to create a different terminology, under the umbrella of what they called Weaponization of Information. Within this framework, the organization uses the term “Information Operations” as “coordinated disinformation campaigns”, including in this definition also misinformation, malinformation and digital hate speech⁹³.

A NOTE ON HATE SPEECH

While the specific term “hate speech” may not have been widely used in early historical contexts, the concept it represents – speech intended to insult, demean, or incite hatred or violence against groups based on certain characteristics – has existed for centuries. However, it was not until the 20th century that societies began to formally recognize and address it within legal and political frameworks.

The Nuremberg Trials post World War II and the subsequent establishment of the United Nations led to a greater emphasis on human rights. This period marked the beginning of international efforts to define and regulate speech that incited hatred and violence, particularly against minority groups. The civil rights movements, particularly in the United States during the 1950s and 1960s, brought further attention to the issue of hate speech.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), adopted in 1966 and in force from 1976, includes provisions against the incitement of racial, religious, or national hatred. This was one of the first major international treaties to address the issue in a legal context.

In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, many countries introduced laws specifically targeting hate speech. This period saw a growing recognition of the need to balance freedom of speech with protections against harmful speech. The advent of the internet and social media has dramatically amplified the reach and impact of hate speech. This has led to new challenges in monitoring, regulating, and responding to hate speech online.

So far, the only internationally used definition of Hate Speech is “It is any kind of communication in speech, writing or behaviour, that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group on the basis of who they are, in other words, based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, colour, descent, gender or other identity factor”. Since some countries have developed legal definitions and policies related to regulating Hate Speech, the concern of humanitarian organizations remains related to the relationship in between these laws and freedom of speech, especially in conflict settings.

Sources:

Gregory S. Gordon, *“The Propaganda Prosecutions at Nuremberg: The Origin of The Propaganda Prosecutions at Nuremberg: The Origin of Atrocity Speech Law and the Touchstone for Normative Evolution Atrocity Speech Law and the Touchstone for Normative Evolution”*, 2017

Jay Stanley, *“Civil Rights Movement is a reminder that free speech is there to protect the weak”*, 2017.

Article 19, *“Towards an interpretation of article 20 of the ICCPR: Thresholds for the prohibition of incitement to hatred”*, 2010
Council of Europe, *“Online hate speech and hate crime”*, 2023.

92 UNSG, “Information Integrity on Digital Platforms”.

93 Mercy Corps, “The weaponization of social media - How social media can spark violence and what can be done about it”, 2019.

However, from the perspective of organizations like the ICRC, the Mercy Corps terminology is contentious. Legally, 'harmful information' does not constitute a means of warfare, nor do misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech qualify as weapons under International Humanitarian Law (IHL). Another challenge linked to the differentiation in between misinformation and disinformation is linked to the inability, often, to understand who, in between all of the people that access a specific content, actually believes the content is true, and who knows it is not and decides to share it anyway. This differentiation of intentionality is often not just difficult to establish, but also dangerous if used to mask legitimate complaints, unhappiness, or lack of trust towards humanitarian organizations.

Since 2019, ICRC has worked with different partners to develop the collective term "Misinformation, Disinformation, and Hate Speech" (shortened to MDH) to describe these prevalent forms of problematic information in conflict scenarios. MDH is now being used by ICRC and other organizations as an umbrella term that can include, but is not limited to misinforma-

tion, disinformation, hate speech, as well as information operations, mal-information and propaganda, both through digital (online) and non-digital (offline) means⁹⁴.

While this term is also not necessarily embraced by the overall humanitarian community, it is nonetheless considered more or less neutral, allowing it to be used by all organizations without adding a judgment of intention. By using MDH, organizations acknowledge that often we do not know if the piece of information we are looking at is a misinformation or disinformation, or a hate speech (also based on national regulations, if present).

Additionally, a piece of information can be created intentionally to deceive, but it may be spread by people that are genuinely convinced it is true, therefore making the same piece of information at the same time a misinformation and a disinformation. For the aim of this Scoping Analysis, we will use misinformation and disinformation as well as MDH, borrowing its definition from ICRC, knowing very well that this may change over time or be adapted by different organizations, in different ways.

94 ICRC, "Addressing Harmful Information in Conflict Settings: A Response Framework for Humanitarian Organizations." (Expected publication: Fall 2024)

ANNEX III: ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED IN KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Organization	
1	FCDO
2	USAID BHA
3	John Hopkins University
4	SecDev Foundation
5	The Sentinel Project
6	WHO
7	MSF
8	UNOCHA
9	UNHCR
10	UN DPKO / DPO
11	Internews
12	Over Zero
13	ICRC
14	CDAC
15	GSMA

ANNEX IV. EVALUATING MDH RESPONSES

The issue of evaluating MDH responses and their impact specifically deserves a section on its own. Looking at the desk review, none of the existing frameworks provides a specific section that looks at the intended impact of MDH from the perspective of a measuring system. However, frameworks like the Mercy Corps one and the one being developed by Internews, and ICRC can be used to look at impact.

If we look, for example, at measuring the impact of MDH responses on vulnerability, we can use as a starting point the already existing [Vulnerability Assessment Framework](#) (VAF) already developed by humanitarian organizations to look at protection and develop an assessment of MDH vulnerabilities.

Similarly, if we look at a taxonomy of harms, like for example social, physical, financial and economical and psychological, we can use this taxonomy to identify specific impacts that we want MDH responses to address, like people being able to identify scams online or people verifying something before sharing it, or less cases of MHPSS related to MDH. However, the measurement of changes in specific harmful actions or harms, while it may be easier in practical ways, it is also harder to be directly connected to one set of specific activities, as it is often the result of a larger ecosystem.

The Internews Information Ecosystem approach⁹⁵ can be also used to understand impact, if we consider it as a model to both predict where MDH may be more present, and to identify what actions on the ecosystem can affect their prevalence. If we use as a theory of change that MDH are affected by a healthy ecosystem, then measuring how healthy an ecosystem is may be a good way to look at impact, both of MDH and of its responses.

When it comes to organizations like MSF or UN agencies, the type of activities implemented are often focused on MDH affecting the organization and their staff, and they are almost exclusively reactive. This makes it very easy to measure impact in the short term, since it is simply about removing the unwanted piece of information and preventing incidents.

However, when discussing impact with humanitarian organizations, all of them highlighted challenges in

measuring the overall impact of their MDH responses on the affected populations when they are the main target of this information. For the time being humanitarian organizations rely on measuring outputs, like piece of information fact-checked or produced, and generally working towards better communication with communities.

Almost all the organizations interviewed highlighted how they still struggle to understand what the ecosystem is that they are operating in, and this is not allowing them to look the overall impact of their responses. This involves understanding who the actors are, what their agenda is, if there is one, and how the engage the affected communities as allies, rather than as part of the problem. Understanding the overall ecosystem would also allow to better differentiate the impact of specific MDH projects from other variables in the ecosystem.

When organizations try to look at impact, they also realize that they do not necessarily have a theory of change that helps them look at MDH, and this is why they are often trying to limit their engagement with MDH unless necessary.

An important issue that emerges from both the desk review and the landscape analysis is the fact that measuring the impact in the long-term means that organizations need to look at trust, community engagement and participation. These issues often are addressed as part of AAP measures and again, almost always measured in terms of outputs.

Another challenge related to evaluating impact is related to behavioral change communication and strategies. If we look at MDH responses as trying to increase resilience and/or decrease vulnerabilities, we are also looking at changes in behaviors. While in the Hate Speech world this has always been understood and embraced, humanitarian organizations are generally uncomfortable with the idea of changing people and communities' behaviors. This is why often a lot of the weight in MDH responses is focused on providing information to communities, with the base principle that they will then decide what the best behavior for them is – in a very neutral and unbiased way.

95 Internews, "Mapping information ecosystem to support resilience", 2017.

Organizations in the humanitarian space are testing and looking at different ways to make their impact measurement better, and here there are some ideas on how this is being done⁹⁶:

- Measure changes in beliefs and grievances coming from the target population that are linked to MDH.
- Measure motivations for sharing specific MDH narratives and likelihood of people to believe these narratives.
- Measuring changes in self-assessed levels of access to verified information in the community.
- Carry out external evaluation of the MDH response programs implemented, informed only by those impacted (vulnerable communities).
- Assessing changes in individuals' ability to verify misinformation and disinformation, including their skepticism towards low-quality information and their ability to question and distinguish between rumors/disinformation.
- Collect and share MDH testimonials, from affected communities and from staff members.
- Measure the ability of an organization to respond to an MDH issues, including how much time it takes to respond and the results.

The problem of measuring impact is also shared with media development organizations that have worked extensively on measuring the impact of information on specific issues. Organizations like Internews and BBC Media Actions often tend to report impact by reporting the number of outputs. Learning from their experience in commissioning large external reviews of their media work, these organizations can offer some good insights for MDH responses based on the production of trustworthy information. One of the main lessons learned is that looking at the impact of informational project, as ICRC calls them, is expensive and takes extensive time and resources.

Proposing a framework to evaluate the impact of projects in humanitarian settings, especially in conflict areas with a focus on countering misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech, requires a multi-faceted approach. Impact measurement goes beyond assessing immediate outputs and looks at the long-term effects and changes in the community.

Below we propose a series of activities that should become more standardized in the humanitarian responses to MDH, but that may be very difficult to

implement due to the requiring proximity with the affected population, freedom of movement and access.

1. **Baseline Assessment:** Before project implementation, a comprehensive survey to understand the existing levels of misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech is extremely useful. This could involve qualitative methods (like focus group discussions) and quantitative methods (surveys measuring attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors).
2. **Defining Impact Indicators:** Impact indicators should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART). Potential indicators could include:
 - Change in the level of community resilience against misinformation and disinformation.
 - Alterations in the frequency and nature of hate speech incidents.
 - Shifts in public opinion or attitudes towards certain groups or narratives.
 - Enhanced critical thinking and media literacy among community members.
3. **Longitudinal Studies:** Implement longitudinal studies to track changes over time. This involves repeated observations of the same variables over long periods.
4. **Comparative Analysis:** Compare data from areas where the project is implemented versus control areas where it isn't. This helps in understanding the direct impact of your interventions.
5. **External Evaluations:** Engage third-party organizations to conduct external evaluations of the project's impact. This adds credibility to the findings.
6. **Behavioral and Attitudinal Change Analysis:** Assess changes in behaviors and attitudes related to misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech. This can be measured through surveys, social media analysis, and other digital footprints.
7. **Policy Impact Analysis:** Evaluate if the project influences policy changes at local or national levels related to countering misinformation and hate speech.
8. **Sustainability Assessment:** Analyze the sustaina-

bility of the project's impacts. Are the changes likely to last after the project ends?

9. **Adaptation and Learning:** Ensure that the framework is adaptable based on interim findings. Learning from what works and what doesn't is crucial for impact measurement.
10. **Ethical Considerations:** Given the sensitive nature of the work, ensure all research and data collection methodologies are ethically sound and do not put participants at risk.

A framework based on measuring impact in this way should be tailored to the specific context of the project and the needs of the community. It's important to have a flexible approach that can adapt to changing circumstances in a conflict setting.

On the other side, evaluating projects that focus on providing information to empower communities to

make informed decisions requires a nuanced approach. These kinds of project are critical in humanitarian settings, especially in conflict areas where misinformation and disinformation can have severe consequences.

However, any impact framework for MDH responses in conflict settings need to consider the realistic situation on the ground, where often access to communities is difficult, trust is eroded, and budgets dedicated to information activities do not have large sums set aside for impact evaluations.

Logistic, access and budget constraints are key here in looking at what kind of impact are we looking at: long-term impact may be realistically measurable when these organizations are not in the country anymore, while short-term impact may be imperceptible, hard to measure or not at all there. Finding the right balance in between resources, added value and need to measure will be key to develop a sustainable impact framework for MDH responses.

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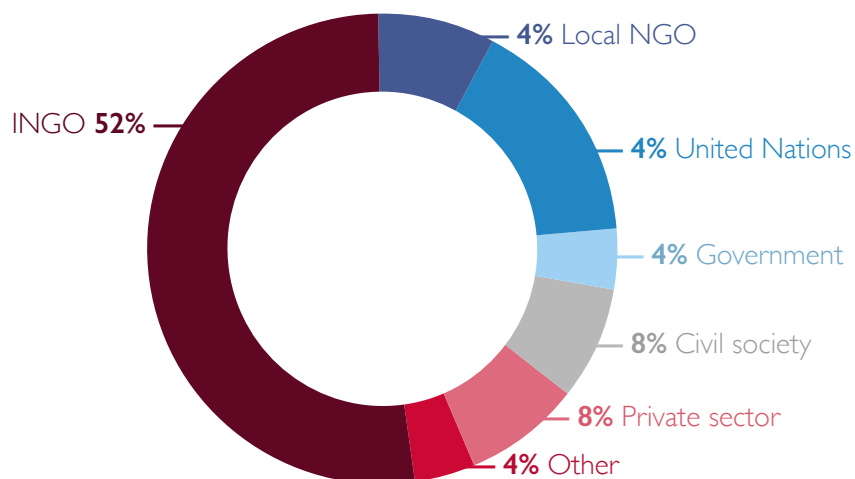
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ANNEX VI. SURVEY RESULTS

Respondents: 55

1. What type of organization do you work for?



2. What are the main challenges you face when working in conflict settings and trying to combat misinformation and disinformation?

	1st choice	2nd choice	3rd choice
Understanding what the most appropriate response is	26%	26%	22%
The volume and magnitude of the phenomenon	22%	22%	9%
Detecting and recording	17%	13%	13%
Fact-checking and debunking	9%	17%	17%
Ranking the possible impact of MDH on the affected people	13%	13%	22%
Understanding and evaluating the impact of my responses	9%	4%	17%
Differentiating between misinformation and disinformation	4%	4%	4%

3. Are there any other challenges that you face?

Cooperation from tech companies
Treating symptoms of disinformation (e.g. fact-checking conspiratorial beliefs) rather than root causes such as addressing inequality and inequitable institutions.
Working with platforms on what to do with the findings or figuring out whether the findings are really as problematic as they seem to be.
Difference between misinformation and hate speech where to draw the line
Lack of accountability by social media platforms
Coordination, and specifically working with platform providers / social media (and similar) companies
Protecting our partners working in conflict areas and managing different risk tolerances between stakeholder organizations. Funding for security training and infrastructure should be expected by donors.

The biggest problem for misinformation is that there are few humanitarian campaigns at scale to counter misinformation with widely available easy to access information to both counter the misinformation and provide the accurate response in a trustworthy way. In order to counter misinformation or disinformation we need to either eliminate the source which is usually out of our control, or provide an effective messaging campaign against it that reaches those most impacted.
Staying up to date with APIs and latest technology while combatting mis/disinformation
Getting the big picture - what is happening to our info ecosystem. And also understanding disinfo in specific contexts.
One of the challenges is the nature of the Mis-dis info campaigns. In conflict context where they are politically driven with intent from one party or another to instigate more chaos and conflict, it is very difficult to find who is really behind the campaigns and how to respond too in the most neutral and independent manner.
There are a wide range of possible interventions/responses beyond 'fact checking/debunking', but this still seems to dominate discussions about responses.
Working with big tech companies, working within the organisation itself with other departments making them understand the challenges, training people, monitoring platforms like TikTok, WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, mental health challenges when dealing a lot with these issues
Links to national, regional and local media outlets is one of the main outstanding gaps in neighbouring countries to conflict states receiving refugee's influx
Quick provisioning of resource is a big challenge - the gap between when we need to be deploying and when we have funding to deploy is critical issue.
The biggest challenge that my organisation faces is related to the difficulty of securing sufficient resources for work related to addressing misinformation. Many funders seem to be focused on short-term support that only comes after very long decision processes (if at all) that have a misguided emphasis on financially self-sustaining initiatives, which is not a realistic expectation in this case.
Impartiality during conflict interventions
Centralized information is complicated due to many ownership restrictions by agency or individual. During emergencies there are always a large number of eager actors in the field and sometimes this eagerness overwhelms the system and due diligence is taken for granted. Due to the time sensitive manner of response during emergencies it is understandable that people on the ground are looking to limit loss as quickly as possible however the best way to ensure that a gap isn't going to create another gap is by being prepared. More preparedness plans need to be in place especially for collecting information across areas that are prone to disasters of any kind. These preparedness activities need to involve government at local level and those collaborating at regional levels. Because there is a large disconnect and ownership risks for protecting the vulnerable individuals, a common repository or framework is not easy to come by.
The magnitude of the misinformation and disinformation, and the feeling of helplessness when it comes to political and conflict-related disinformation that is harmful to civilians' mental health and spirit, which we as humanitarians feel are not in a position to respond to because we don't have enough information to counter and because it could be perceived as being too involved in the conflict.

4. What do you think is needed in the humanitarian space to be able to combat misinformation and disinformation in conflict settings in a complementary and effective way?

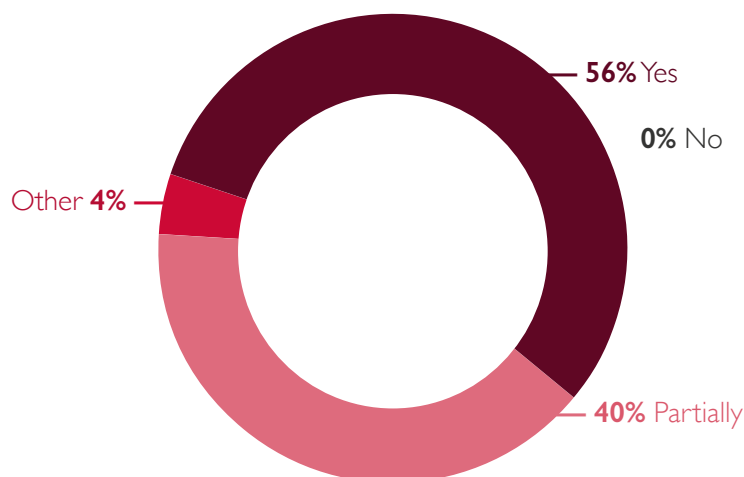
	1st choice	2nd choice	3rd choice
A common framework for understanding MDH	22%	9%	26%
Better coordination of different actions/activities	9%	22%	13%
A system to communicate and work with Social Media companies	26%	4%	17%
Common impact measurement metrics	4%	9%	13%
A community of practice	9%	17%	13%
A theory of change to design responses	4%	13%	9%
Better awareness of the issue	26%	9%	4%
A unique and agreed vocabulary	17%	4%	26%

5. Is there any other need that we did not mention above?

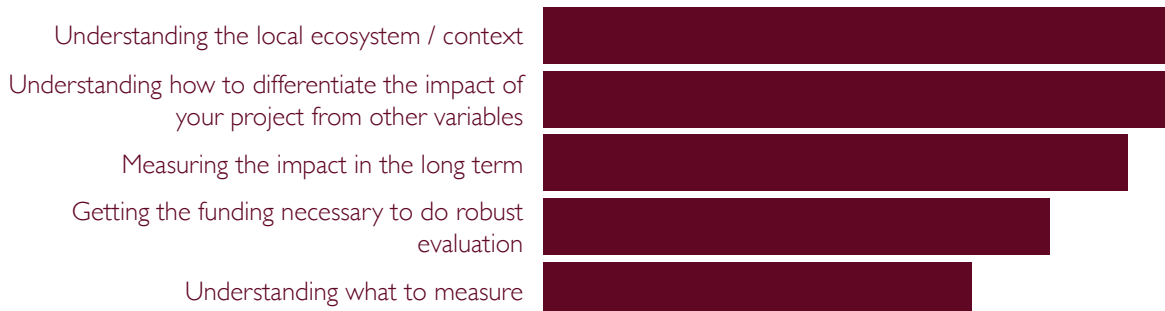
Better data sharing amongst fact checkers.

Credible threats of legal/regulatory sanctions against platforms to promote compliance
CSO and Media for community involvement
Continuity in funding of action to minimise and address mis and disinformation
We are still far from Information Ecosystem assessments (or equivalent) being standard practice
Social media companies are restricting data which used to be publicly accessible to researchers. APIs that used to be available to aid with data collection and analysis are no longer available. Filling that data collection gap is vitally important if we want to understand trends, campaigns and their impacts.
More good information is the only actual counter.
A yearly overview of trends in humanitarian mis/disinfo.
Need to understand the limits of a humanitarian INGO in combatting, preventing and responding MDH campaigns in conflict contexts. It goes without saying that humanitarians need to improve their response but it's also crucial to understand up to what point in the context they can deal with this phenomenon. Also, there should be a standard shared information ecosystem assessment for each conflict context with thorough analysis of in-country and neighbouring countries influences.
There is a lack of learning on 'what works', and research to really understand the problem in different contexts. There is also a lack of co-ordination between different donors and implementers on holistic approaches to the issue.
Coordination between different organisations that are being attacked, better tools, better expertise (human resources dedicated to these issues), documentation of cases, buy in from senior leadership within organisations
Response taxonomies for typical types of crises - pre-bunking library built on these - multi-lingual support
There needs to be greater focus on developing interventions that include populations that are not predominantly online or at least not highly digitised. Social media is definitely a highly relevant factor in these situations but not everyone is on it, especially in some of the world's most conflict-affected areas. It's important not to leave such communities behind, especially when offline rumours and misinformation are also very impactful in conflict zones and other humanitarian situations.
One very important detail to consider is to look at current MDH process within the Humanitarian Response Cycle (plan) and identify the areas that trigger outcomes without focusing on root causes as well as risks to agencies rather than affected communities. The disconnect will cause focus to be more on programs better for the agency and plans will be developed as such making the collection of information biased of some sort. Perhaps dig deeper and be more inclusive and collect information that is closer to the individual's situation (context) to home in the differences in groups within an emergency context to develop communication strategies that are appropriate for various groups. Build a more cross cutting list of targets.
An actual willingness to address misinformation and disinformation that impacts affected communities' well-being and lives, but also a discussion about the issues because the role it plays in recent conflicts is damaging and we should acknowledge that it is causing harm to civilians.

6. Do you agree with the statement that it is generally difficult to measure the impact on end-users / affected populations of projects targeting misinformation and disinformation in conflict?



7. If you answered Yes or Partially, what do you think are the main challenges in evaluating the impact of projects targeting misinformation and disinformation in conflict settings?



8. What do you think is the best realistic way to measure the impact of projects targeting misinformation and disinformation in conflict?

	1st choice	2nd choice	3rd choice
Measuring changes in behaviours	29%	17%	21%
Measuring changes in trust towards humanitarians	17%	17%	25%
Measuring changes in the information ecosystem	21%	17%	8%
Measuring community vulnerability/resilience	13%	25%	13%
Measuring changes in the volume of misinformation/disinformation	21%	4%	13%
Measuring good/validated information produced/shared	13%	21%	4%
Measuring mis/disinformation debunked	8%	17%	13%

9. Are there any other ways you think should be used to measure the impact of projects targeting misinformation and disinformation in conflict, that we have not mentioned above?

Measuring the impact of actions endorsed to platforms their actions taken and how of that has impacted the information environment
Reviewing of community policies for social media companies
Changes in information / media attitudes (a little different as it's trust in media / info companies rather than humanitarians)
Measure changes in beliefs and grievances of target population. Measure motivations for sharing specific narratives. Methodologies that include rigorous RCTs and A/B testing.
Actual stories from people about ways the misinformation impacted them. This can only come from trusted sources not extracted
Staff buy in, trainings given, cases documented, lessons learned shared, guidelines or frameworks created (even a playbook or something like that)
The mix of indicators proposed include output, outcome and impact level indicators. To measure impact, and considering your proposed set, you would need to go for changes in behavior. But not all misinformation projects have that as a target. So, it is quite tricky. I would reformulate the question and the set proposed. In most settings an overall description of the set of stereotypes regarding certain population groups and measure it at the beginning and at the end can add an impact level to that study. I believe answers to surveys would be far more reliable and closer to the reality than those that measure trust on a scale from 1 to 5.
My organisation measures changes in self-assessed levels of access to information in the communities that we work with.
Carry out external validation processes of programs implemented based on information used to develop response programs. These processes should be informed only by those impacted (vulnerable communities, donors, host governments and agencies).
Assessing changes in individuals' ability to verify misinformation and disinformation, but also their skepticism towards low-quality information and their ability to question and distinguish between rumors/disinformation.

10. If you could speak directly to donors about your needs when it comes to detect, understand, and combat misinformation and disinformation in conflict situations, what would you ask them?

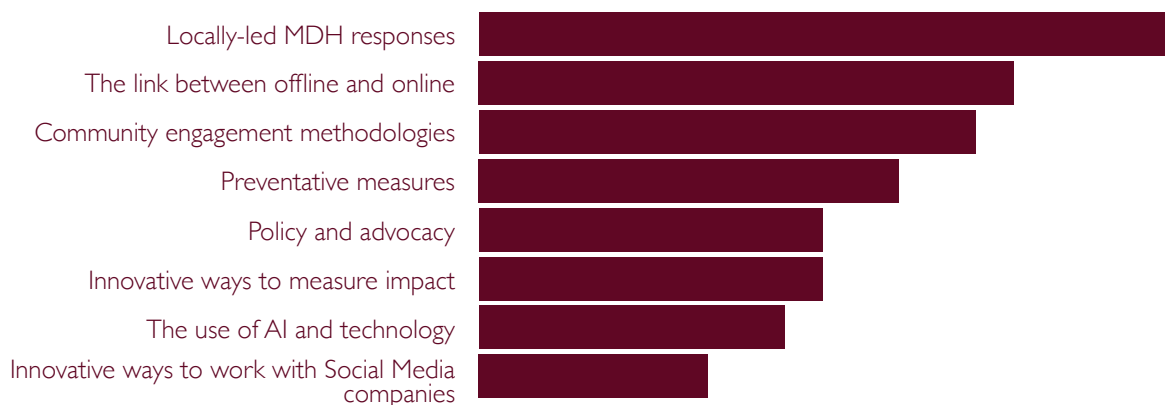
We need a consistent set of tools, ideas, and structures for identifying and combatting misinformation as a whole. Fact checks don't do the job fully but provide a good baseline for further in-depth reporting.
A more robust funding that involves a longer-term investment from inception that includes increasing capacity of NGOs to detect localized MDH incidents, to its mature stages of programming that include literacy initiatives and dealing with social media companies.
The emphasis on misinformation/disinformation may serve to obscure more fundamental conceptual problems in programming and its implementation
Establish and train community ambassadors and use of community radio to communicate in local dialects for community understanding
What are you doing to hold social media platforms accountable? Why can users be anonymous, and bots not dealt with?
To fund activities that promote consortia / collective responses and encourage SM companies to work with these rather than with specific orgs
I would ask for flexibility in timelines and deliverables. These environments change quickly and a program that can adapt to changes and can afford to test or experiment with approaches and then pivot based and the resulting data will be more effective. But it requires understanding and flexibility from donors.
Why are we investing in approaches to better understand the root cause of mis/disinfo if we cannot structurally address it or solve it without 1. Better technology systems and messaging as institutions 2. More quality information dissemination? It seems like 1+2 are better high impact lower effort investments with more certain payoff. The most common Misinformation/ disinformation in aid is the product of our poor/ absence of communication- not rumors and targeted campaigns from Bad actors.
More flexibility with the methodology and research, as activities escalate, context shifts really fast, especially in countries that switch complex conflicts.
I think they should consider funding a humanitarian disinfo monitoring unit (perhaps in OCHA?) that can also function as a resource center and provide training and support to humanitarian agencies (including local ones).
To monitor and evaluate the funding and impact that these projects can have concretely and to be more flexible in re-addressing given funding for one activity to another if latter no-longer pertinent.
We need better research to understand the problem in each/different contexts, we need a clear research and evidence agenda on understanding 'what works', we need to move away from reactive fact checking and debunking, and think about more preventative approaches (e.g. prebunking, literacy, support to media ecosystem), and we need better co-ordination across donor programmes. Also need to increase this as a priority and stop trying to address it after there is a problem, as the effective solutions need longer-term work.
Funding for human resources to dedicate their time and expertise on this issue. Funding for research and analysis on these cases. Funding for creation and management of community of practice Funding for incentives on dealing with these issues and sharing (awards on how to deal with this?) Relationship building with big tech as a sector, so we can better influence their responses Relationship building to bridge the gap between practitioners, thinkers and big tech
We need a common effort mixing both preventive (MIL) early warning (rumor tracking and warning context indicators on the levels of MDH in an information environment) and reactive (fact checking, debunking) practices mixing all main players in the field and including media outlets and development players. In this field there is a strong need for a common approach with IOGs playing a leading role. I would propose a suitable neutral UN agency leading a platform where players can find each other, debates can be raised, and tools can be put at the disposal of the different stakeholders. This platform could and should include the development of a common framework of understanding for the different understanding and approaches towards MDH.
Fund more of this work.
It's important to increase not only the availability of rapid response funds to support this kind of work when it is needed in response to newly arising crises but also the availability of longer-term funding since an important part of effective programming to address misinformation is the encouragement of positive behavior change, which takes time.
I think communities have an ever-growing trust in radio with more than 50% of adults using radio as a trusted medium of information. Similarly, with the advancement in technology, many youths are mostly vulnerable to misinformation and disinformation and even retaliation towards such information, having both a physical and online community radio can have a positive impact that can be measured within the shortest period of time. Thus, sponsoring communities to start or boost their community-led radio stations can be the best approach

To donors I would request two things. One, funding. These funds in my line of work will enable deeper learning of the information ecosystem and understanding and localization of interventions especially in sub-Saharan Africa where internet penetration is not as developed. Additionally, funding will go a long way in the transfer of skill as knowledge to local community peacebuilders and the youth to create a sort of peace culture that is informed from the bottom up. Secondly, policy, advocacy and strategy. This will be mostly targeted at rallying social media and digital platforms and co creating a tracking and response mechanism as per local contexts, advocate for more stricter community guidelines, fact checking mechanism introduced on their platforms and finally policy advice to governments on laws that hold social media and digital platforms accountable whilst they operate in their local contexts.

This is already the first problem (my opinion of course). The clear need by agencies is never defined properly. Again, in my opinion, the need is based on how to make response appropriate, and this means getting donor (or other stakeholder) support within their capacity to promote change whether that be in making decisions at Government level, as an implementing partner or through funding to promote aid agencies mandated respective programs. By looking close at what each donor can and can't do, you can build communication strategies that lock in clear restrictions to ensure collection and dissemination of information is as close to accurate as possible holding each stakeholder accountable.

I would say that you should not fund a humanitarian response without prioritizing the countering of mis/disinformation as part of the response, particularly when it comes to situations of armed conflict. This is for various reasons, such as the sophisticated way the parties to the conflict are using social media to disinform and influence the conflict for more wins, influence the perceptions, and even worse use images and language that instil or promote fear in civilian populations, and armed carriers using social media to influence the perceptions of global actors or present themselves as respectable and law-abiding actors which also affects global perceptions and can indirectly or directly influence the support to the humanitarian response

11. What do you think should be prioritized in funding innovation to combat misinformation and disinformation in conflict situations?



ANNEX VII.

**MISINFORMATION,
DISINFORMATION AND
HATE SPEECH IN CONFLICT**

IMPACT MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK

Anahi Ayala Iacucci | May 2024

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BACKGROUND

Funded by the Governments of Canada, the US, the UK, the Netherlands, and various partners, Grand Challenges Canada invests in innovators across low- and middle-income countries, conflict zones, and Canada, driving impactful solutions to global health and humanitarian challenges. The bold ideas Grand Challenges Canada supports employ Integrated Innovation®—creatively combining scientific, technological, social and business innovation—as they work to catalyze their scale, sustainability, and impact. Grand Challenges Canada is one of the largest impact-first funders in Canada with over 1,500 innovations funded to that are championed by innovators in more than 100 countries. These innovations have already improved 20 million lives and are expected to save up to 1.78 million lives and improve up to 64 million lives by 2030.

Creating Hope in Conflict: A Humanitarian Grand Challenge (CHIC), a partnership of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), the Government of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Global Affairs Canada (GAC), with support from Grand Challenges Canada, is the first innovation challenge to focus on humanitarian crises caused by conflict. Launched in 2018, partners contributed \$38 million to enable humanitarian actors and agencies, local emergency responders, and the private sector to work alongside affected communities and to respond more nimbly to complex humanitarian emergencies.

CHIC identifies and scales innovations working to improve access to energy, health and lifesaving information that apply new insights, technologies, and approaches to improve, and in many cases save, the lives of the most vulnerable and hardest-to-reach communities in humanitarian crises caused by conflict. It provides innovators with access to financial capital, a network of technical experts, and potential investors and capacity strengthening resources, while fostering collaboration and learning within the CHIC innovator community. CHIC also seeks to create wider systems-level changes within the humanitarian sector.

Within its lifesaving information portfolio, CHIC has funded a small number of innovations working to tackle misinformation, disinformation and/or hate speech

(MDH), including Sentinel Project, HalaSystem and Mumurate. Robustly assessing the effects of these interventions has proven challenging. Grand Challenges Canada commissioned this scoping analysis to help inform potential future direction of the work undertaken by CHIC and other actors working in this field.

The scoping study has been used to spearhead a collaboration between CHIC, ICRC and potentially other partners. With this collaboration, CHIC will support existing work done by ICRC and its partners in developing a framework tailored to the humanitarian sector to counter MDH. This framework will provide a strategic blueprint to stakeholders in the humanitarian sector to guide their interventions and initiatives in the future. CHIC's contribution so far includes developing this impact measurement framework, designed to robustly address misinformation, MDH interventions in fragile and conflict affected settings.

This Evaluation Framework, based on the ICRC MDH Framework, is designed to enhance the evaluation, measurement and impact assessment of MDH projects implemented in conflict settings. The development of this framework was a collaborative process, integrating both qualitative data from more than 50 key informants interviews and quantitative data from a survey and a desk review.

Central to the methodology is the understanding that countering misinformation requires a collective effort involving experts, practitioners, and donors. By fostering collaborative partnerships and engaging actively with stakeholders, HGC aims to develop solutions that are practical and grounded in the realities of humanitarian practice.

This document is intended to facilitate the monitoring and evaluation of misinformation, disinformation and hate speech (MDH) interventions, supporting data-driven decision-making. It is also meant to assist innovators in assessing the impact of their interventions on the communities they serve. HGC will use this Impact Measurement Framework to evaluate project proposals targeting MDH in humanitarian crisis and to support grantees in assessing the impact, sustainability and scalability of their interventions.

CORE DEFINITIONS

MDH

There is no international agreed-upon definition of MDH or harmful information. In this framework, MDH refers to any information that can potentially cause or contribute to harm, whether physically, psychologically, economic, or social. Also known as “harmful information” MDH includes, but is not limited to, the following categories if they are likely to cause adverse consequences:

- **Misinformation:** False information spread by individuals who believe it to be true.
- **Disinformation:** False information disseminated intentionally for specific gain, including economic gain.
- **Malinformation:** True information shared with malicious intent to cause harm or negative effects.
- **Hate speech:** All forms of expression (text, images, audio, video) that spread, incite, promote or justify hatred and violence based on intolerance, usually targeting identity traits such as gender, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc.

Different types of MDH often coexist within the same context and can amplify one another, leading to complex harms. Identifying these types of harmful information can help humanitarian actors devise appropriate responses that align with international legal frameworks. MDH is a complex phenomenon that can manifest through digital and non-digital means, seamlessly crossing online and offline worlds and being easily and cheaply amplified by various actors.

MDH INTERVENTIONS

In this framework, we focus on activities, programs or products that aim to achieve one or more of the following protection objectives:

- Preventing or mitigating humanitarian consequences deriving from harmful information:** This involves integrating harmful information into existing prevention and protection discussions with authorities and engaging with a diverse range of stakeholders. The goal is to foster an environment more conducive for the respect of the rights, safety, integrity and dignity of individuals – both offline and online.
- Responding to humanitarian consequences and addressing IHL and IHRL violations related to harmful information:** This may include traditional activities or programs designed to address the immediate humanitarian impacts of harmful information. Examples include providing information, medical assistance, food, or water, and engaging in dialogue with authorities, affected communities, and other actors, such as tech companies.
- Strengthening people’s resilience and agency to protect themselves against the effects of harmful information:** Information and communication are crucial for building resilience. Enhancing self-protection involves not only providing affected individuals and local organisations with the information, knowledge and tools but also actively involving them in the prevention and detection of harmful information and the development of mitigation measures.
- Addressing implications of harmful information on trust in and integrity of humanitarian action:** Harmful information can target, threaten or discredit humanitarian organisations, their staff and their partners. This can undermine the acceptance, security, and effectiveness of their programs and operations.

IMPACT

In this framework, “Impact” refers to the effects of programs on the physical, psychological, economic, or social well-being of individuals and communities in any of the following domains:

Individual level:

- **Strengthening self-protection and resilience:** Products or services aimed at promoting information integrity and enhancing psychological, economic or social well-being in collaboration with community members and local organisations. These interventions may include supporting humanitarian staff, engaging in fact-checking collaborations with civil society, and implementing preventive strategies to debunk falsehoods before they spread. They also work to reduce vulnerabilities to MDH by improving connectivity for conflict-affected individuals or by implementing media and digital literacy programs for humanitarian staff, volunteers and community members.

National or local level:

- **Bilateral and confidential dialogue:** Activities designed to create, support or strengthen dialogue with relevant actors to remind them obligations and responsibilities toward civilians and humanitarian workers during hostilities. This includes bilateral and confidential discussions to raise awareness, address dehumanizing language and narratives, and advocate for the de-escalation of harmful narratives.
- **Public communication:** Products or services that use public communication to raise awareness and contribute to a more resilient information environment. This includes calls for violence de-escalation, protection of vulnerable populations, and promotion of IHL and IHRL. These activities also aim to provide useful information to conflict-affected people, reduce physical and psychological harm from MDH, and reinforce the humanitarian mission and mandate.
- **Engaging with local and international media:** Initiatives aimed at working with local and international media and humanitarian organisations to raise awareness about the humanitarian consequences of harmful information. These initiatives also focus on the role media and organizations can play in preventing, mitigating, and responding to harmful information in conflict-settings. The goal

is to improve literacy, attitudes and behaviours related to MDH.

- **Development and implementation of legislation:** Activities focused on advocating for the creation and enforcement of laws and regulations that address the causes and systems contributing to the spread and amplification of harmful information. This includes promoting respect for freedom of expression and other fundamental freedoms online and offline, as well as supporting free and diverse media, in accordance with international standards.
- **Creating or strengthening community networks:** Initiatives focused on establishing or enhancing spaces for dialogue among experts and organizing policy discussions or workshops with local media, and influencers and researchers on harmful information. These efforts may involve collaborating with organizations dedicated to information resilience, responsible journalism, community-based protection, human rights, prevention of hatred and genocide, and peacebuilding. Such initiatives aim to improve the psychological, economic, and social well-being of communities affected by MDH.
- **Protection outcomes:** Products or services designed to address specific humanitarian consequences of MDH for individuals or communities, both offline and online. This includes measures to protect against physical harm and other adverse effects of harmful information.

Global level:

- **Political/diplomatic:** Engage in political and diplomatic efforts to de-escalate harmful narratives and advocate for conflict-specific approaches. These approaches should recognize the risks posed by harmful information and emphasize the need to strengthen the community resilience and information ecosystems.
- **Techplomacy:** Activities or products aimed at engaging with tech companies and other relevant stakeholders, including donors. These efforts raise awareness of current and potential harms in conflict settings, advocate for conflict-sensitive policies, and promote adherence to applicable international legal norms. Overall, these activities enhance resilience and reduce vulnerabilities.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE I: A HEALTHY INFORMATION ECOSYSTEM DOES NOT EQUAL ABSENCE OF MDH

A healthy information ecosystem, even under normal circumstances, is not free from imperfections. Information can be spread with mistakes or inaccuracies due to incomplete data, misinterpretations, or simple human error.

Healthy ecosystems support a range of viewpoints. While some opinions may stem from misunderstanding, others reflect different perspectives on complex issues. The goal is to ensure factual accuracy while accommodating diverse viewpoints.

Open societies value the right to free expression, even if those views are unpopular or inaccurate. Navigating the line between free speech and harmful hate speech can be delicate, and healthy ecosystems enable nuanced discussions about these boundaries.

Humanitarian organizations face limitations when addressing all forms of MDH in conflict zones. They often have limited resources – such as funding, personnel, and expertise – making it challenging to address every instance of MDH.

In complex emergencies, humanitarians typically prioritize critical needs, such as food, water, and shelter. Addressing MDH may need to compete with these fundamental needs.

Additionally, responding to certain types of MDH, especially hate speech, can put staff and beneficiaries at risk. Humanitarian organizations must prioritize safety when determining their response strategies.

Given these limitations, a different approach is necessary, one that focuses not on the number of instances of harmful information debunked, corrected, or halted, but on the impact, including potential impact, on affected people and on the staff and operations of humanitarian organizations.

This approach is based on the idea that responding to MDH requires a strategic focus on the most impactful instances. The key components of this approach include:

- **Understanding the context:** The impact of MDH can vary based on specific contexts, cultural nuances, and existing power dynamics. Analysing these factors helps tailor responses effectively.
- **Detect and assessing high-risk MDH:** Prioritize MDH that has the potential to harm people, undermine humanitarian efforts, or cause significant damage to specific populations.
- **Collaboration:** Humanitarian organizations should work with local media, fact-checking initiatives, and community leaders to develop targeted, context-specific interventions.

By focusing on MDH with the greatest potential for harm and employing a strategic, impact-based response, humanitarian organizations can enhance their effectiveness in mitigating the negative effects of MDH in conflict settings.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 2: RIGOR AND MEASURABILITY ARE CRITICAL TO DETERMINING IMPACT

All innovators applying for funding for MDH should develop and present a Theory of Change (see below) that clearly connects their activities to the expected outcomes and impacts. Based on this Theory of Change, innovators will establish specific indicators at the outputs, and impact level, which will be measured and tracked throughout the project and, after its conclusion (see Annex I and II).

Using SMART indicators (see Annex I and II), innovators must provide tangible evidence of their MDH programs' impact. The relevant outcomes to monitor and evaluate will depend on the domain the innovator's project falls into.

While measuring impact for MDH projects, especially in Domains A and D, may be challenging, innovators should, where feasible, consider the following:

Evaluating impact using group-level comparisons

Assessing group-level differences is crucial for determining the effectiveness of an intervention. This includes:

- **Controlled/comparison studies:** These studies are essential for identifying significant differences in outcomes between an intervention and control group. They must have a sufficiently large sample size to detect meaningful effects. Without controlled studies, it is difficult to determine whether observed changes in outcome measures

are due to the intervention.

- **Baseline/Endline studies:** These may be sufficient when there is a clear relationship between program activities and primary outcome indicators, and minimal likelihood of alternative factors influencing the outcome. For example, educational interventions may benefit from pre-post assessments to gauge the impact of an MDH literacy program on knowledge, attitudes and behaviours. However, due to the potential for knowledge decay, such evaluations should include long-term follow-up (e.g., 6-12 mos. post-intervention).
- **Alternative methods:** If controlled/comparison studies are not feasible, other methods, such as regression analysis, can be considered to explore the predictive relationship between intervention exposure and measures of respect for rights, safety, integrity dignity of individuals, and overall well-being. GCC will evaluate the suitability of various research designs on a case-by-case basis.

Monitoring impact using individual-level analyses

Monitoring impact at the individual level is crucial for determining the number of people benefiting from the project. However, for projects in domain A and C, it is also essential to analyze resilience and long-term effects, beyond just counting the individuals affected. While tracking the numbers of individuals is important and can be straightforward if validated thresholds and cut-offs are used, these thresholds and cut-offs should be pre-defined to ensure accurate measurement.

Measuring impact looking at affected communities' resilience

Resilience is typically measured using surveys and focus groups to assess how well individuals understand MDH, their ability to identify it, and whether they are less likely to share false information or engage in hateful speech. It also evaluates their tendency to seek additional sources for verification. Increases in scores over time suggest improved community resilience against MDH. However, it is important to remember that self-reported data may not always accurately reflect actual behaviour.

Measuring impact looking at changes in vulnerability

Knowledge, Attitudes, and Behaviours (KAB) studies using surveys or focus groups can be effective for measuring changes in:

- Knowledge about MDH (e.g., ability to identify misinformation)
- Attitudes towards MDH (e.g., tolerance for hate speech)
- Behaviours related to MDH (e.g., sharing information, reporting hate speech)

Increased knowledge and positive attitude shifts suggest reduced vulnerability, while decreased sharing of misinformation and hate speech indicate changes in behaviour. Pre- and post-intervention comparisons are ideal, but baseline data collection may be sufficient for some projects.

Once robust evidence of impact has been established, GCC may collaborate with innovators to extrapolate the impact during further scaling. While tracking and monitoring outcomes for every participant may not be feasible as an innovation scales widely, it is good practice to conduct ongoing monitoring among a random sample of participants to ensure quality, fidelity and effectiveness is maintained.

Example: If an innovator demonstrates that participants in their program (intervention group) show a statistically significant improvement in their ability to find verified information when exposed to misinformation, compared to a control group, this indicates successful impact. The evaluation, based on a group-level analysis, confirms the innovation's effectiveness. The innovator should also analyze individual level to assess the proportion of end-users experiencing meaningful change. Post-evaluation, the innovator can continue monitoring impact at the individual-level, or extrapolate findings from the evaluation to estimate the impact among end-users.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 3: CALCULATING A COUNTERFACTUAL IS A NUANCED EXERCISE AND VARIES BY PROGRAM

GCC defines counterfactuals as “what could have happened in the absence of an innovation”. When available, this typically includes the following three counterfactual considerations:

- **Baseline:** What were the MDH outcomes before the intervention began?
- **Control:** How does the impact of the intervention on the beneficiary group compare to that on the control group?
- **Alternative programs:** Are there other products, services, or implementers that might offer similar benefits as the innovation being evaluated?

For innovations in Domain B (Responding to Humanitarian Consequences and Addressing IHL and IHRL Violations Related to Harmful Information) and Domain C (Strengthening People's Resilience and Agency to Protect Themselves Against the Effects of Harmful Information), it is often the case that few alternatives for protection from MDH are available in the countries where GCC-funded innovations are implemented.

Thus, for innovations in these domains, GCC will generally consider impact as the difference observed between baseline and endline measures. Comparisons with control and beneficiary groups, or adjustments for access to alternative programs are not required if comparable MDH response options are unavailable.

Conversely, for innovations in Domain A (Preventing or Mitigating Humanitarian Consequences Deriving from Harmful Information) and Domain D (Addressing Implications of Harmful Information on Trust in and Integrity of Humanitarian Action), all three counterfactual considerations should be explored, when developing targets and reviewing results.

This is because alternative programs-while not specifically designed to address MDH but aimed at improving the overall health of the information ecosystem- may still be accessible to end-users. Examples include programs that enhance economic livelihoods online, introduce new media laws, or foster social connections. As we expand our understanding of factors contributing to a positive information ecosystem, so too should our perception of existing MDH interventions.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 4: MEASURING IMPACT AS A REQUIREMENT FOR AAP

The ability to measure impact for MDH activities and programs is closely related to Accountability to Affected People and is reiterated in key humanitarian standards and documents.

For example, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), the Core Humanitarian Standard Alliance (CHSA), and the Sphere Handbook emphasize the importance of measuring the impact of humanitarian interventions. Here's a summary of their perspectives:

IASC

- **Focus on Accountability and Effectiveness:** The IASC promotes accountability to affected populations and donors. Measuring impact helps organizations to demonstrate the effectiveness of their interventions and ensures that resources are used efficiently.
- **The Response Monitoring Framework (RMF):** IASC developed the RMF to monitor and evaluate humanitarian responses. This framework includes indicators to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of interventions.

CHSA

- **Quality and Accountability Through Standards:** CHSA promotes quality and accountability by applying the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) framework.
- **CHS Standard I: Accountability to Affected People:** This standard highlights the importance of understanding the needs, priorities, and feedback of affected populations. Measuring impact demonstrates how interventions address these needs.
- **CHS Commitment to Continuous Improvement:** The CHS framework encourages ongoing learning and improvement. Measuring impact helps organizations identify areas for improvement and adapt their interventions based on evidence.

THE SPHERE HANDBOOK

- **Published by the Sphere Project:** This widely recognized handbook outlines core principles and minimum standards for humanitarian response.
- **Humanitarian Charter Principle I: The Right to Life and Dignity:** This principle emphasizes the need for evidence-based interventions to ensure aid effectiveness and minimize harm.

Evaluating the impact of interventions aimed at misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech (MDH) presents unique challenges. MDH often operates in the digital realm, complicating efforts to track its reach and influence definitively. Additionally, the effects of MDH interventions can be subtle and long-term, making them difficult to quantify. Attributing changes in attitudes or behaviours solely to a specific intervention is complex, as other factors may also be influencing outcomes.

Despite these difficulties, measuring impact is crucial for improving humanitarian responses to MDH. Without a clear understanding of what works and what doesn't, organizations risk wasting resources on ineffective strategies. Measuring impact allows us to:

- **Demonstrate effectiveness:** Showcasing positive outcomes helps organizations secure continued funding and support for MDH interventions.
- **Learn and adapt:** Evaluation identifies areas for improvement and informs adaptations to better address evolving tactics and contexts.
- **Prioritize resources:** Impact data guides resource allocation, ensuring efforts focus on the most effective strategies.

While acknowledging these challenges, we must strive for realistic and measurable solutions. This may involve focusing on intermediate outcomes, such as increased media literacy or improved community dialogue, rather than solely aiming to quantify a decrease in MDH. Utilizing a mix of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods can also provide a more nuanced understanding of the interventions impact (see Suggested Impact Measurement Indicators" on page 113).

MDH IMPACT MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK FOR HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS IN CONFLICT

THE MDH FRAMEWORK

The MDH response framework that this Impact Framework wants to support is a reference document for humanitarian organisations to assist them to more systematically conceptualise and implement effective responses to the humanitarian consequences of harmful information in situations of armed conflict. The MDH framework is also intended to support organisations to better understand and address the increasing impacts that the digital dimensions of conflict have on people affected by conflict and humanitarian action.

The MDH framework builds on previous work done by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN Human Rights), the United Nations Department of Peace Operations (UN DPO), Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), Access Now, Internews, Article 19, and a number of humanitarian and human rights organisations. It also draws on dialogue and collaboration with relevant stakeholders in government, academia, civil society and the private sector.

The MDH framework is intended to guide organizations working in conflict settings in the development of further guidance tailored for their staff. The framework is accompanied with a multistakeholder dialogue and will be complemented with further actionable tools.

MDH THEORY OF CHANGE

Based on the framework above, GCC has developed a Theory of Change that considers the objectives, activities, outcomes and potential impact of MDH activities, programs, or products. This Theory of Change helps innovators identify four key elements necessary for achieving impact:

OUTCOMES

What is the change we are trying to achieve?

INTERVENTIONS

How will we implement these change?

IMPACT

What will that change ultimately lead to?

ASSUMPTIONS

Why do we think this approach will work?

Not all organizations will implement the same activities or work towards the same objectives. Each innovator should select the relevant activities, outcomes and impacts from this Theory of Change. If grantees have different activities or outcomes that they think will produce the same impact, they are encouraged to include these in their Theory of Change. The section related to assumptions is not shown here, as it needs to be created by each organization independently based on their mandate, activities, beneficiaries and on the current local landscape.

Select intervention type to view Theory of Change and outcome measurement guidelines:

STRENGTHENING PEOPLE'S SELF-PROTECTION AND RESILIENCE	PROTECTION ACTIVITIES	BILATERAL AND CONFIDENTIAL DIALOGUE
PUBLIC COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES	ENGAGEMENT WITH LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIA	DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF LEGISLATION
CREATION AND STRENGTHENING OF COMMUNITY NETWORKS	POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC ENGAGEMENT	TECHPLOMACY

STRENGTHENING PEOPLE'S SELF-PROTECTION AND RESILIENCE

DEFINITION

Products or services that are taken to promote information integrity, increasing psychological, economic or social wellbeing, in collaboration with community members and local organisations. They may encompass, inform and support humanitarian staff, fact-checking collaborations with civil society, and implementation of preventive strategies.

INTERVENTIONS

INFORM AND SUPPORT HUMANITARIAN STAFF

- Increased capacity of humanitarian staff to address misinformation
- More effective communication strategies
- Reduced risk of spreading misinformation unintentionally

FACT-CHECKING COLLABORATIONS WITH CIVIL SOCIETY

- Increased reach and credibility of fact-checking efforts
- Enhanced trust in local sources of information
- More robust fact-checking ecosystem

DEBUNK FALSE INFORMATION

- Reduced public exposure to false information
- * **Increased awareness of common misinformation tactics**
- * **Public empowered to identify and debunk misinformation**

IMPLEMENT MEDIA AND DIGITAL LITERACY PROGRAMS FOR THE GENERAL POPULATION

- * **Improved ability of the public to evaluate information**
- Increased scepticism towards unverified claims
- More informed public discourse

IMPLEMENT MEDIA AND DIGITAL LITERACY PROGRAMS FOR HUMANITARIAN STAFF, VOLUNTEERS & COMMUNITY

- More responsible, effective communication from humanitarian actors
- Reduced risk of manipulation by malicious actors
- * **Enhanced trust in humanitarian organizations**

IMPROVE CONNECTIVITY FOR CONFLICT-AFFECTED PEOPLE

- * **Increased access to reliable information sources**
- Reduced isolation and vulnerability to manipulation
- Greater opportunity for community dialogue

IMPACT

STRENGTHENING PEOPLE'S RESILIENCE AND AGENCY TO PROTECT THEMSELVES AGAINST THE EFFECTS OF HARMFUL INFORMATION

OUTCOME MEASUREMENT GUIDELINES

* Outcomes of interest

Counterfactual

- Baseline
- Control data
- Availability of alternative programs

Evidence

1. Pre- and post-capacity assessment
2. Focus groups, surveys and interviews
3. Pre- and post-assessment
4. Source evaluation exercise
5. Websites and social media analytics

PROTECTION ACTIVITIES

DEFINITION

Activities, products or services that respond to specific humanitarian consequences of MDH for individuals or communities where they arise (both offline and online) including protection from physical harm.

INTERVENTIONS

PROVIDE INFORMATION, MEDICAL ASSISTANCE, AND SUPPORT SERVICES FOR VICTIMS OF MDH

CREATE ROBUST SYSTEMS TO RESPOND TO SPECIFIC HUMANITARIAN CONSEQUENCES OF INDIVIDUALS OR COMMUNITIES WHERE THEY ARISE (BOTH OFFLINE AND ONLINE)

OUTCOMES

* Mitigation of the negative consequences of MDH on individuals and communities

* Access to resources for healing and recovery

* Reduced vulnerability of marginalized groups to MDH

* Faster and more effective response to the negative impacts of misinformation

* Reduced risk of violence and human rights abuses

* Improved support and protection for vulnerable populations

IMPACT

RESPONDING TO HUMANITARIAN CONSEQUENCES AND ADDRESSING IHL AND IHRL VIOLATIONS RELATED TO HARMFUL INFORMATION

OUTCOME MEASUREMENT GUIDELINES

* Outcomes of interest

Counterfactual

- Baseline
- Control data
- Availability of alternative programs

Evidence

1. Surveys
2. Case management reports
3. Mapping of protection services
4. Tracking of service utilizations
5. Focus groups

BILATERAL AND CONFIDENTIAL DIALOGUE

DEFINITION

Activities that create, support or strengthen dialogue to remind relevant actors of their obligations and responsibilities towards civilians and humanitarian actors during the conduct of hostilities. This includes bilateral and confidential dialogue to raise awareness, address approaches that give rise to dehumanizing language and narratives, and to help advocate for the de-escalation.

INTERVENTIONS

REMINDE RELEVANT ACTORS OF THEIR OBLIGATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARDS CIVILIANS AND HUMANITARIAN ACTORS DURING HOSTILITIES

ADVOCATE THE DE-ESCALATION OF HARMFUL NARRATIVES

RAISE AWARENESS OF, AND DISCUSS HARMFUL INFORMATION INSTANCES AND CONCERNS

RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF REFRAINING FROM CENSORSHIP THAT MAY VIOLATE FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION STANDARDS

ADVOCATE FOR APPROACHES THAT ADDRESS DEHUMANISING LANGUAGE AND NARRATIVES

OUTCOMES

Strengthened legal protections for civilians and humanitarian actors

Increased accountability for violations

Deterrence of violence against civilians and humanitarian staff

Increased public awareness of the dangers of misinformation

Increased ability to identify harmful narratives

Decreased susceptibility to manipulation

More robust and effective protection measures available for freedom of expression

Increase effectiveness for strategies used to address misinformation without censorship

Stronger recognition of human rights in the digital space

Incorporation of local perspectives in addressing misinformation

*** Strengthen tailored solutions for specific needs and challenges**

*** Improved collaborative efforts and trust between local and international actors**

*** Reduced use of inflammatory language and hateful rhetoric**

*** Increased respect for human dignity**

*** More constructive and solution-oriented dialogue**

IMPACT

PREVENTING OR MITIGATING HUMANITARIAN CONSEQUENCES DERIVING FROM HARMFUL INFORMATION

ADDRESSING IMPLICATIONS OF HARMFUL INFORMATION ON TRUST IN AND INTEGRITY OF HUMANITARIAN ACTION

OUTCOME MEASUREMENT GUIDELINES

*** Outcomes of interest**

Counterfactual

- Baseline

Evidence

1. Review of legal frameworks
2. Expert consultations
3. Reported incidents of violence
4. Security reports
5. Case studies
6. Mapping of collaborative initiatives
7. Meetings report

PUBLIC COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

DEFINITION

Products or services that use public communication to raise awareness and contribute to a more resilient information environment, including calls for the de-escalation of violence, protection of vulnerable populations and the promotion of IHL and IHRL. These are also activities that provide useful information, decreasing physical, psychological harm coming from MDH.

INTERVENTIONS

RAISE AWARENESS AND CONTRIBUTE TO A HEALTHIER INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT

- Increased public awareness of the importance of factual information
- Reduced exposure to misinformation and disinformation
- More robust and trusted information ecosystem

CALL FOR DE-ESCALATION OF VIOLENCE

- Reduction in violence and tensions
- Increased pressure on actors fueling violence
- Creation of space for dialogue and negotiation

CALL FOR PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE POPULATIONS AND THE PROMOTION OF IHL AND IHRL

- Increased protection for civilians and vulnerable groups
- Reduced human rights abuses during conflict
- Greater accountability for violations of IHL and IHRL

PROVIDE USEFUL INFORMATION FOR CONFLICT-AFFECTED PEOPLE

- Improved access to critical information for people in need
- * Increased awareness of available resources and services
- * Reduced risk of exploitation and harm

REMIND AUDIENCES OF HUMANITARIAN MISSION AND MANDATE

- * Increased public understanding of role of humanitarian actors
- * Greater support for humanitarian efforts
- * Enhanced trust and cooperation with local communities

OUTCOMES

IMPACT

PREVENTING OR MITIGATING HUMANITARIAN CONSEQUENCES DERIVING FROM HARMFUL INFORMATION

ADDRESSING IMPLICATIONS OF HARMFUL INFORMATION ON TRUST IN AND INTEGRITY OF HUMANITARIAN ACTION

OUTCOME MEASUREMENT GUIDELINES

* Outcomes of interest

Counterfactual

- Baseline
- Control data
- Availability of alternative programs

Evidence

1. Media monitoring reports
2. Assessments and surveys
3. Focus group discussions
4. Risk self-assessments
5. Opinion pools

ENGAGEMENT WITH LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIA

DEFINITION

Initiatives that aim at engaging with local and international media, and humanitarian organisations, to sensitize them about the humanitarian consequences of harmful information on people and humanitarian actor and the role they can play in preventing, mitigating, and responding to it in conflict-settings.

INTERVENTIONS

MEDIA DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT

SENSITIZE ABOUT THE HUMANITARIAN CONSEQUENCES OF HARMFUL INFORMATION ON PEOPLE AND HUMANITARIAN ACTORS

SENSITIZE ABOUT THE ROLE MEDIA CAN PLAY IN PREVENTING, MITIGATING AND RESPONDING TO IT IN CONFLICT-SETTINGS

OUTCOMES

- Improved quality and accuracy of reporting
- Increased diversity of voices in the media
- Stronger and more independent media landscape

- * **Increased awareness of potential harm caused by misinformation**
- Greater commitment to ethical and responsible journalism
- * **Reduced risk of misinformation fueling violence and human rights abuse**

- * **Increased capacity of media to counter misinformation and disinformation**
- More responsible and accurate reporting on conflict
- * **Reduced spread of harmful narratives that can lead to violence**

IMPACT

PREVENTING OR MITIGATING HUMANITARIAN CONSEQUENCES DERIVING FROM HARMFUL INFORMATION

ADDRESSING IMPLICATIONS OF HARMFUL INFORMATION ON TRUST IN AND INTEGRITY OF HUMANITARIAN ACTION

OUTCOME MEASUREMENT GUIDELINES

* **Outcomes of interest**

Counterfactual

- Baseline
- Control data
- Availability of alternative programs

Evidence

1. Fact checking reports.
2. Media monitoring
3. Training reports/assessment
4. Social listening
5. Expert reviews
6. Risk assessments

DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF LEGISLATION

DEFINITION

Activities aimed at advocating for the development and enforcement of relevant laws and regulations. These may address the underlying causes of, and the systems and processes that lead to, the spread and amplification of harmful information, promote the respect for freedom of expression and other fundamental freedoms online and offline, as well as promoting free and diverse media.

INTERVENTIONS

ADVOCACY TO PROMOTE LAWS ADDRESSING UNDERLYING CAUSES OF, AND SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES THAT LEAD TO, THE SPREAD AND AMPLIFICATION OF HARMFUL INFORMATION

ADVOCACY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND ENFORCEMENT OF RELEVANT LAWS AND REGULATIONS

PROMOTE THE RESPECT FOR FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND OTHER FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS ONLINE AND OFFLINE

PROMOTE FREE AND DIVERSE MEDIA, IN LINE WITH INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

OUTCOMES

Development of legal frameworks that address online manipulation and hate speech

*** Stronger safeguards against the spread of harmful information**

More robust legal environment for promoting a healthy information ecosystem

*** Effective enforcement mechanisms for existing and new laws**

Increased accountability for those who spread misinformation and disinformation

Deterrence of malicious actors

*** Protection of freedom of expression and other fundamental freedoms**

*** Development of solutions that address misinformation without violating human rights**

Upholding human rights in the digital space

Increased diversity of voices and perspectives in the media

More robust and independent media landscape

Reduced risk of state control and manipulation of information

IMPACT

PREVENTING OR MITIGATING HUMANITARIAN CONSEQUENCES DERIVING FROM HARMFUL INFORMATION

ADDRESSING IMPLICATIONS OF HARMFUL INFORMATION ON TRUST IN AND INTEGRITY OF HUMANITARIAN ACTION

OUTCOME MEASUREMENT GUIDELINES

*** Outcomes of interest**

Counterfactual

- Baseline

Evidence

1. Review of legal frameworks
2. Expert consultations
3. Review of platform policies
4. Legal environment assessments
5. Tracking of sanctions and penalties

CREATION AND STRENGTHENING OF COMMUNITY NETWORKS

DEFINITION

Initiatives that create or strengthen spaces for dialogue with a community of experts and organize policy dialogues with, for example, local media, influencers and researchers on harmful information. This includes collaborating on information resilience, responsible journalism, community-based protection, human rights, prevention of hatred and genocide and peacebuilding.

INTERVENTIONS

CREATE OR STRENGTHEN SPACES FOR DIALOGUE WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES OF EXPERTS

ORGANISE EVENTS LIKE POLICY DIALOGUES AND/OR WORKSHOPS WITH LOCAL MEDIA, INFLUENCERS AND RESEARCHERS

STRENGTHEN COLLABORATIONS WITH ORGANIZATIONS WORKING ON INFORMATION RESILIENCE, RESPONSIBLE JOURNALISM, COMMUNITY-BASED PROTECTION, HUMAN RIGHTS, PREVENTION OF HATRED AND GENOCIDE AND PEACEBUILDING

OUTCOMES

* **Increased participation of local communities in addressing misinformation**

Development of context-specific solutions

Enhanced trust and collaboration between local and international actors

Improved understanding of the challenges and opportunities related to misinformation in the conflict context

* **Development of effective strategies for countering misinformation**

* **Stronger partnerships between media, researchers, policymakers, and civil society**

* **Enhanced capacity to address misinformation from multiple angles**

More responsible and accurate reporting on conflict

Stronger and more resilient information ecosystem

IMPACT

PREVENTING OR MITIGATING HUMANITARIAN CONSEQUENCES DERIVING FROM HARMFUL INFORMATION

ADDRESSING IMPLICATIONS OF HARMFUL INFORMATION ON TRUST IN AND INTEGRITY OF HUMANITARIAN ACTION

OUTCOME MEASUREMENT GUIDELINES

* **Outcomes of interest**

Counterfactual

- Baseline
- Control data
- Availability of alternative programs

Evidence

1. Mapping of existing initiatives
2. Surveys
3. Case studies
4. KIIs
5. Skills assessments

POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC ENGAGEMENT

DEFINITION

Engagement on political and diplomatic levels to de-escalate harmful narratives and promote a conflict-specific approach that recognizes harmful information and the humanitarian risks it poses and reinforces the need to strengthen the resilience of communities and information ecosystems.

INTERVENTIONS

ENGAGE ON POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC LEVELS TO DE-ESCALATE HARMFUL NARRATIVES

DE-ESCALATE HARMFUL NARRATIVES

PROMOTE CONFLICT-SPECIFIC APPROACHES THAT RECOGNIZE HARMFUL INFORMATION AND THE HUMANITARIAN RISKS IT POSES

PROMOTE CONFLICT-SPECIFIC APPROACHES THAT REINFORCES THE NEED TO STRENGTHEN THE RESILIENCE OF COMMUNITIES AND INFORMATION ECOSYSTEMS

OUTCOMES

- Increased international cooperation in addressing misinformation
- * **Reduced use of misinformation as a weapon of war**
- Protection of vulnerable populations from MDH

- Reduced intergroup tensions and hostilities**
- Increased understanding and empathy between communities
- Creation of an environment conducive to peacebuilding

- * **More effective strategies for countering misinformation that takes into account the specific dynamics of the conflict**
- * **Reduced impact of misinformation on the conflict situation**
- Increased focus on addressing the root causes of misinformation

- * **Increased capacity of communities to identify, verify, and respond to misinformation**
- Stronger social fabric less susceptible to manipulation
- Long-term solutions for promoting peace and stability

IMPACT

PREVENTING OR MITIGATING HUMANITARIAN CONSEQUENCES DERIVING FROM HARMFUL INFORMATION

ADDRESSING IMPLICATIONS OF HARMFUL INFORMATION ON TRUST IN AND INTEGRITY OF HUMANITARIAN ACTION

OUTCOME MEASUREMENT GUIDELINES

* **Outcomes of interest**

Counterfactual

- Baseline

Evidence

1. Surveys and focus group discussions
2. Case studies
3. Expert consultations
4. Tracking of human rights and IHL abuses linked to MDH
5. Skills assessments

TECHPLOMACY

DEFINITION

Activities or products that facilitate the engagement with tech companies and/or other relevant stakeholders, including donors, to raise awareness of current and potential harms in conflict settings, advocate for conflict-sensitive policies, and for respecting applicable international legal norms.

INTERVENTIONS

ENGAGING WITH TECH COMPANIES / OTHER RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS, INCLUDING DONORS, TO RAISE AWARENESS OF CURRENT AND POTENTIAL HARMS IN CONFLICT SETTINGS

ADVOCACY FOR CONFLICT-SENSITIVE POLICIES WITH TECH COMPANIES

ADVOCACY FOR RESPECTING APPLICABLE INTERNATIONAL LEGAL NORMS

OUTCOMES

* **Increased accountability of tech companies for content moderation**

Development of technological solutions

A more responsible online environment

* **Increased awareness among tech companies of specific risks**

Development of conflict-sensitive policies that address the spread of misinformation without violating human rights

* **Greater accountability of tech companies for promoting a healthy online environment**

* **Increased recognition of the international legal aspects of misinformation**

Deterrence of malicious actors who spread misinformation for war crimes, genocide, etc.

Stronger international cooperation in holding perpetrators accountable

IMPACT

PREVENTING OR MITIGATING HUMANITARIAN CONSEQUENCES DERIVING FROM HARMFUL INFORMATION

ADDRESSING IMPLICATIONS OF HARMFUL INFORMATION ON TRUST IN AND INTEGRITY OF HUMANITARIAN ACTION

OUTCOME MEASUREMENT GUIDELINES

* **Outcomes of interest**

Counterfactual

- Baseline

Evidence

1. Transparency reports
2. Reviews of content moderation policies
3. Mapping of existing solutions
4. Analysis of legal cases
5. Engagement with tech companies reports

IMPACT MEASUREMENT GUIDELINES BY OBJECTIVE

STRENGTHENING PEOPLE'S RESILIENCE AND AGENCY TO PROTECT THEMSELVES AGAINST THE EFFECTS OF HARMFUL INFORMATION

OUTCOMES OF INTEREST

- Increased knowledge and skills in identifying and verifying information
- Increased use of reliable information sources and fact-checking tools
- Increased participation in community-led initiatives to counter misinformation

Counterfactual

- Baseline
- Availability of alternative programs

Evidence

1. Pre- and post-test assessments of media literacy skills among target communities
2. Web analytics data on usage of fact-checking platforms or websites promoted by the project.
3. Pre-and post-assessment of self-reported use of information sources by affected population
4. Activity reports
5. Number and type of community-based activities focused on media literacy and information resilience

RESPONDING TO HUMANITARIAN CONSEQUENCES AND ADDRESSING IHL AND IHRL VIOLATIONS RELATED TO HARMFUL INFORMATION

OUTCOMES OF INTEREST

- Faster and more effective response to humanitarian needs arising from misinformation
- Reduced impact of misinformation on access to humanitarian assistance
- Increased accountability for violations of IHL and IHRL related to misinformation

Counterfactual

- Baseline
- Control data
- Availability of alternative programs

Evidence

1. Reported incidents of violence and human rights abuses attributed to misinformation
2. Analysis of media content promoting violence
3. Surveys of authorities and stakeholders on their knowledge of misinformation risks
4. Number and type of collaborative initiatives involving authorities, civil society, and media

IMPACT MEASUREMENT GUIDELINES BY OBJECTIVE

PREVENTING OR MITIGATING HUMANITARIAN CONSEQUENCES DERIVING FROM HARMFUL INFORMATION

OUTCOMES OF INTEREST

Reduced violence and human rights abuses linked to misinformation

Improved awareness of authorities and stakeholders about the dangers of misinformation

Increased collaboration between stakeholders on addressing misinformation

Counterfactual

- Baseline
- Control data
- Availability of alternative programs

Evidence

1. Reported incidents of violence and human rights abuses attributed to misinformation
2. Analysis of media content promoting violence
3. Surveys of authorities and stakeholders on their knowledge of misinformation risks
4. Number and type of collaborative initiatives involving authorities, civil society, and media

ADDRESSING IMPLICATIONS OF HARMFUL INFORMATION ON TRUST IN AND INTEGRITY OF HUMANITARIAN ACTION

OUTCOMES OF INTEREST

Improved public perception of humanitarian organizations

Reduced incidents of violence or threats against humanitarian staff

Increased collaboration between humanitarian organizations and local communities

Counterfactual

- Baseline
- Availability of alternative programs

Evidence

1. Opinion polls on public trust in humanitarian organizations
2. Reported incidents of violence, threats, or harassment linked to misinformation campaigns
3. Activity Report
4. Number and type of collaborative initiatives between humanitarian actors and local communities

SUGGESTED OUTCOME INDICATORS AND MEASUREMENT METHODS BY TYPE OF INTERVENTION

Select intervention type to view suggested outcome indicators and measurement methods:

STRENGTHENING PEOPLE'S SELF-PROTECTION AND RESILIENCE	PROTECTION ACTIVITIES	BILATERAL AND CONFIDENTIAL DIALOGUE
PUBLIC COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES	ENGAGEMENT WITH LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIA	DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF LEGISLATION
CREATION AND STRENGTHENING OF COMMUNITY NETWORKS	POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC ENGAGEMENT	TECHPLOMACY

OUTCOME INDICATORS AND METHODS: STRENGTHENING PEOPLE'S SELF-PROTECTION AND RESILIENCE

Outcomes	Outcome indicators	Measurement methods
Increased capacity of humanitarian staff to address misinformation	% increase in capacity of humanitarian staff to address misinformation	Pre- and post-training assessments: Develop assessments that test knowledge and skills related to misinformation identification, verification, and response strategies. Administer these before and after staff training programs. Focus groups and interviews: Conduct discussions with staff to understand their experiences applying their new skills and identify areas for improvement in training or support.
More effective communication strategies	% increase in the reach and consumption of communication products	Website and social media analytics: Track website traffic, social media engagement metrics (likes, shares, comments), and content downloads to measure reach and consumption. Surveys: Conduct surveys among target audiences to gauge their awareness of specific communication products and their perceived effectiveness.
Reduced risk of spreading misinformation unintentionally	% decrease in the number of people that spread misinformation unintentionally	Surveys: Conduct surveys before and after interventions to measure changes in self-reported unintentional sharing of misinformation. Focus groups: Discuss information-sharing habits and decision-making processes to understand how interventions influence people's behaviour.
Increased reach and credibility of fact-checking efforts	% increase in the reach and credibility of fact-checking efforts	Website and social media analytics: Track website traffic and engagement metrics for fact-checking platforms. Media monitoring: Monitor news coverage and social media mentions to assess the reach and influence of fact-checking efforts. Surveys: Conduct surveys among target audiences to gauge their awareness of fact-checking platforms and their trust in the information provided.
Enhanced trust in local sources of information	% increase in trust in local sources of information	Surveys: Conduct surveys before and after interventions to measure changes in trust levels towards local news outlets and community leaders. Focus groups: Discussions can reveal perceptions of local information sources and how interventions might be influencing trust.

Outcomes	Outcome indicators	Measurement methods
More robust fact-checking ecosystem	% increase in the effectiveness of fact-checking initiatives	Fact-checking success rate: Track the number of times fact-checks successfully debunk misinformation and influence public discourse. Changes in online conversations: Analyze online discussions around specific issues debunked by fact-checks to see if there's a decrease in the spread of misinformation.
Reduced public exposure to false information	% decrease of public exposure to false information	Social media listening tools: Use these tools to track the prevalence of keywords associated with debunked misinformation across social media platforms. Surveys: Conduct surveys to gauge self-reported exposure to misinformation before and after interventions.
Increased awareness of common misinformation tactics	% increase in awareness of common misinformation tactics	Pre- and post-test assessments: Design assessments to test knowledge of common misinformation tactics before and after educational interventions. Focus groups: Discussions can reveal the level of understanding participants have about how misinformation is created and spread.
Public empowered to identify and debunk misinformation	% increase in the ability of the public to identify and debunk misinformation	Simulated scenarios: Create scenarios where participants encounter misinformation and assess their ability to identify and debunk it. Surveys: Conduct surveys to gauge self-reported confidence and skills in identifying and debunking misinformation.
Improved ability of the public to evaluate information	% increase in the ability of the public to evaluate information	Source evaluation exercises: Develop exercises where participants evaluate the credibility of different information sources. Focus groups: Discussions can reveal participants' thought processes and decision-making when encountering new information.
Increased skepticism towards unverified claims	% increase in skepticism towards unverified claims	Surveys: Conduct surveys to gauge self-reported levels of skepticism towards unverified claims before and after interventions. Focus groups: Discussions can reveal how participants approach claims lacking verification and whether interventions are influencing their approach.
More informed public discourse	% increase in informed public discourse	Social media analysis: Analyze the quality of public discourse on social media platforms related to topics targeted by interventions. Focus groups: Discussions can reveal changes in participants' understanding of complex issues and their ability to engage in constructive dialogue.
More responsible and effective communication from humanitarian actors	% increase in responsible and effective communication from humanitarian actors	Media monitoring: Monitor media coverage of humanitarian organizations to assess transparency and the effectiveness of communication strategies. Focus groups: Engage target communities to understand their perceptions of humanitarian organizations' communication and identify areas for improvement.
Reduced risk of manipulation by malicious actors	% decrease in risks of manipulation by malicious actors	Social media listening tools: Track the activity of known malicious actors spreading misinformation and assess the effectiveness of interventions in disrupting their efforts. Expert analysis: Engage experts in information warfare and social media manipulation to analyze trends and assess the impact of interventions.
Enhanced trust in humanitarian organizations	% increase in trust in humanitarian organizations	Opinion polls: Conduct opinion polls before and after interventions to measure changes in public trust towards humanitarian organizations. Focus groups: Discussions can reveal perceptions of humanitarian organizations' trustworthiness and how communication strategies are impacting trust.
Increased access to reliable information sources	% increase in access to reliable information sources	Surveys: Conduct surveys to measure changes in respondents' self-reported access to and use of reliable information sources. Website and social media analytics: Track website traffic and engagement metrics for platforms promoting reliable information sources.

Outcomes	Outcome indicators	Measurement methods
Reduced isolation and vulnerability to manipulation	% decrease in isolation and vulnerability to manipulation	Surveys: Conduct surveys before and after interventions to measure changes in feelings of isolation, social connectedness, and trust in others. Focus groups: Discussions can reveal participants' experiences with social isolation and how interventions might be fostering a sense of community and reducing susceptibility to manipulation.
Greater opportunity for community dialogue	% increase in opportunities available for community dialogue	Mapping of existing dialogue initiatives: Identify and map existing community dialogue initiatives before starting your project. Participation data: Track the number of participants in established dialogue initiatives, both pre-existing and those created through your project.

OUTCOME INDICATORS AND METHODS: PROTECTION ACTIVITIES

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Outcomes	Outcome indicators	Measurement methods
Mitigation of the negative consequences of MDH on individuals and communities	% decrease in the negative consequences of MDH on individuals and communities	Surveys: Conduct surveys among community members to assess their perceptions of the impact of MDH on their lives (e.g., psychological well-being, social cohesion). Case management trends: Use case management information to look for trends of protection cases that are connected to MDH Focus groups: Discussions with community members can reveal specific examples of how MDH has affected them and their communities.
Access to resources for healing and recovery	% increase in access to resources for healing and recovery	Mapping of protection services: Identify and map existing and new protection services available to individuals and communities affected by MDH (e.g., mental health counseling, legal aid). Tracking of service utilization: Monitor the utilization of support services provided by the organization or its partners.
Reduced vulnerability of marginalized groups to MDH	% decrease in vulnerability of marginalized groups to MDH	Surveys: Conduct surveys among marginalized groups to assess their perceived vulnerability to MDH and their capacity to counter it. Focus groups: Discussions with marginalized groups can reveal their specific concerns and experiences with MDH.
Faster and more effective response to the negative impacts of misinformation	% increase in the effectiveness of responses to the negative impacts of misinformation	Case studies: Conduct case studies of successful interventions to address the negative impacts of MDH (e.g., trauma healing programs, community dialogues). Expert consultations: Consult with psychologists, social workers, and conflict resolution specialists to assess the effectiveness of protection interventions.
Reduced risk of violence and human rights abuses	% decrease in the risk of violence and human rights abuses	Tracking of violence and human rights abuses: Monitor reported incidents of violence and human rights abuses, differentiating incidents linked to MDH from other causes. Media monitoring: Analyze media coverage to assess the level of reporting that incites violence or promotes harmful narratives.
Improved support and protection for vulnerable populations	% increase in the support and protection of vulnerable populations	Reports from protection agencies: Analyze reports from humanitarian organizations and UN agencies on the situation of vulnerable populations and the effectiveness of protection measures. Focus groups: Discussions with vulnerable populations can reveal their perceptions of safety and access to protection from MDH and violence.

OUTCOME INDICATORS AND METHODS: BILATERAL AND CONFIDENTIAL DIALOGUE

Outcomes	Outcome indicators	Measurement methods
Strengthened legal protections for civilians and humanitarian actors	Strengthened legal protections for civilians and humanitarian actors	<p>Review of legal frameworks: Analyze legal changes related to misinformation, hate speech, and protection of civilians and humanitarian actors.</p> <p>Expert consultations: Consult legal experts on the effectiveness of new legal frameworks.</p>
Increased accountability for violations	% increase of accountability for violations	<p>Tracking of investigations and prosecutions: Monitor the number of investigations and prosecutions related to misinformation and hate speech violations.</p> <p>Analysis of case outcomes: Analyze the outcomes of investigations and prosecutions to assess accountability.</p>
Deterrence of violence against civilians and humanitarian staff	% decrease of violence against civilians and humanitarian staff	<p>Reported incidents of violence: Track and analyze reported incidents of violence against civilians and humanitarian staff, differentiating incidents linked to misinformation from other causes.</p> <p>Security reports: Utilize security reports from humanitarian organizations to assess trends in violence.</p>
Increased public awareness of the dangers of misinformation	% increase of public awareness of the dangers of misinformation	<p>Surveys: Conduct surveys to measure public awareness and understanding of the dangers of misinformation and hate speech.</p> <p>Media monitoring: Analyze media coverage to assess the prominence of messages about the dangers of misinformation.</p>
Increased ability to identify harmful narratives	% increase in the ability to identify harmful narratives	<p>Pre- and post-test assessments: Develop assessments to test knowledge and skills in identifying harmful narratives before and after educational interventions.</p> <p>Focus groups: Discussions can reveal participants' understanding of harmful narratives and their ability to recognize them.</p>
Decreased susceptibility to manipulation	% decrease in susceptibility to manipulation	<p>Surveys: Conduct surveys to measure self-reported susceptibility to manipulation by misinformation, focusing on changes in trust and information-seeking behavior.</p> <p>Focus groups: Discussions can reveal participants' experiences with manipulation and how interventions might be fostering resilience.</p>
More robust and effective protection measures available for freedom of expression	% increase in Protection measures available for freedom of expression	<p>Review of legal frameworks: Analyze legal changes related to freedom of expression and identify potential restrictions.</p> <p>Expert consultations: Consult legal and human rights experts to assess the impact of legal frameworks on freedom of expression.</p>
Increase effectiveness for strategies used to address misinformation without censorship	% increase in the number of effective strategies used to address misinformation without censorship	<p>Mapping of existing strategies: Identify existing methods used to address misinformation without censorship.</p> <p>Case studies: Conduct case studies of successful interventions that address misinformation without censorship.</p>
Stronger recognition of human rights in the digital space	% increase in human rights recognised in the digital space	<p>Review of legal frameworks: Analyze legal frameworks to assess the recognition of human rights in the digital space (e.g., right to privacy, freedom of expression).</p> <p>Expert consultations: Consult human rights experts to assess the impact of legal and technological developments on digital rights.</p>

Outcomes	Outcome indicators	Measurement methods
Incorporation of local perspectives in addressing misinformation	Incorporation of local perspectives in addressing misinformation	<p>Mapping of existing local initiatives: Identify and map existing local initiatives addressing misinformation.</p> <p>Participation data: Track the participation of local actors in project activities and decision-making processes.</p> <p>Focus groups: Discussions with local communities can reveal their perspectives on misinformation challenges and the effectiveness of interventions.</p>
Strengthen tailored solutions that address specific needs and challenges	% increase in tailored solutions that address specific needs and challenges	<p>Project documentation: Review project documents to assess the extent to which activities are tailored to address specific local needs and challenges.</p> <p>Focus groups: Discussions with local communities can reveal their perceived effectiveness of interventions in addressing their specific concerns.</p>
Improved collaborative efforts and trust between local and international actors	% increase in collaborative efforts and trust between local and international actors	<p>Mapping of collaborative initiatives: Identify and map existing collaborative initiatives between local and international actors.</p> <p>Focus groups: Discussions with local and international actors can reveal their perception of collaboration and trust levels.</p>
Reduced use of inflammatory language and hateful rhetoric	% decrease in the use of inflammatory language and hateful rhetoric	<p>Social media listening tools: Track the prevalence of keywords associated with hate speech and inflammatory language across social media platforms.</p> <p>Media monitoring: Analyze media coverage to assess the prominence of hateful rhetoric.</p>
Increased respect for human dignity	% increase in media outputs that reflect respect for human dignity	<p>Media monitoring: Analyze media content to assess the representation of different groups and the use of respectful language.</p> <p>Focus groups: Discussions with media professionals can reveal their perceptions of the impact of interventions on promoting respectful media content.</p>
More constructive and solution-oriented dialogue	% increase in constructive and solution-oriented dialogue on Social Media	<p>Social media analysis: Analyze the quality of public discourse on social media platforms related to topics targeted</p>

OUTCOME INDICATORS AND METHODS: PUBLIC COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

Outcomes	Outcome indicators	Measurement methods
Increased public awareness of the importance of factual information	% increase in public awareness of the importance of factual information	<p>Surveys: Conduct surveys to measure public understanding of the importance of factual information and the dangers of misinformation.</p> <p>Media monitoring: Analyze media coverage to assess the prominence of messages about fact-checking and media literacy.</p>
Reduced exposure to misinformation and disinformation	% decrease in exposure to misinformation and disinformation	<p>Website and social media analytics: Track website traffic and engagement metrics for platforms promoting reliable information sources.</p> <p>Expert assessments: Consult media and information specialists to assess the quality and credibility of information sources promoted by the project.</p>
More robust and trusted information ecosystem	% increase in robust and trusted information	<p>Website and social media analytics: Track website traffic and engagement metrics for platforms promoting reliable information sources</p> <p>Key Informants Interviews: Consult media and information specialists to assess the quality and credibility of information sources promoted by the project.</p>
Reduction in violence and tensions	% decrease in violence and tensions	<p>Reported incidents of violence: Track and analyze reported incidents of violence, differentiating incidents linked to misinformation from other causes.</p> <p>Focus groups: Discussions with community members can reveal their perceptions of changes in tensions and violence.</p> <p>Security reports: Utilize security reports from humanitarian organizations to assess trends in violence.</p>
Increased pressure on actors fueling violence	% increase in pressure on actors fueling violence	<p>Media monitoring: Analyze media coverage to assess the level of public scrutiny and condemnation of actors inciting violence.</p> <p>Expert consultations: Consult conflict analysts and human rights experts to assess the impact of interventions on pressuring actors fueling violence.</p>
Creation of space for dialogue and negotiation	% increase of spaces for dialogue and negotiation	<p>Mapping of dialogue initiatives: Identify and map existing and new dialogue initiatives facilitated by the project.</p> <p>Participation data: Track the number of participants in dialogue initiatives.</p> <p>Focus groups: Discussions with participants can reveal their perceptions of the effectiveness of dialogue initiatives in fostering peace.</p>
Increased protection for civilians and vulnerable groups	% increase in protection for civilians and vulnerable groups	<p>Protection reports: Analyze reports from humanitarian organizations and UN agencies on incidents of violence against civilians.</p> <p>Focus groups: Discussions with vulnerable groups can reveal their perceptions of safety and access to protection.</p>
Reduced human rights abuses during conflict	% decrease in human rights abuses during conflict	<p>Human rights reports: Analyze reports from human rights organizations on documented abuses linked to misinformation.</p> <p>Expert consultations: Consult human rights experts to assess the impact of interventions on reducing human rights violations fueled by misinformation.</p>
Greater accountability for violations of IHL and IHRL	Increased accountability for violations of IHL and IHRL	<p>Tracking of investigations and prosecutions: Monitor the number of investigations and prosecutions related to war crimes and human rights abuses linked to misinformation.</p> <p>Analysis of case outcomes: Analyze the outcomes of investigations and prosecutions to assess accountability.</p>
Improved access to critical information for people in need	% increase in access to critical information for people in need	<p>Surveys: Conduct surveys to measure changes in self-reported access to critical information (e.g., safety information, humanitarian services).</p> <p>Focus groups: Discussions with affected communities can reveal their access to and understanding of critical information.</p>

Outcomes	Outcome indicators	Measurement methods
Increased awareness of available resources and services	% increase in awareness of available resources and services	<p>Surveys: Conduct surveys to measure public awareness of available resources and services provided by humanitarian organizations.</p> <p>Media monitoring: Analyze media coverage to assess the prominence of information about available resources.</p>
Reduced risk of exploitation and harm	% decrease in risks of exploitation and harm	<p>Surveys: Conduct surveys among vulnerable groups to assess their perceived risk of exploitation and harm due to misinformation.</p> <p>Focus groups: Discussions with vulnerable groups can reveal their experiences with exploitation and how interventions might be fostering a safer environment.</p>
Increased public understanding of the role of humanitarian actors	% increase in public understanding of the role of humanitarian actors	<p>Surveys: Conduct surveys to measure public understanding of the role and activities of humanitarian organizations.</p> <p>Media monitoring: Analyze media coverage to assess the portrayal of humanitarian organizations in the media.</p>
Greater support for humanitarian efforts	% increase in public support for humanitarian efforts	<p>Opinion polls: Conduct opinion polls to measure public support for humanitarian efforts.</p> <p>Focus groups: Discussions with the public can reveal their perceptions of the importance of humanitarian work and their willingness to support it.</p>
Enhanced trust and cooperation with local communities	% increase in trust and cooperation with local communities	<p>Focus groups: Engage local communities to understand their perceptions of trust and cooperation with humanitarian organizations.</p> <p>Project evaluations: Analyze project reports to assess the level of collaboration with local actors.</p>

OUTCOME INDICATORS AND METHODS: ENGAGEMENT WITH LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIA

Outcomes	Outcome indicators	Measurement methods
Improved quality and accuracy of reporting	% increase in the quality and accuracy of reporting	<p>Fact-checking reports: Analyze the number of fact-checks conducted by media outlets involved in the project, focusing on accuracy and impact.</p> <p>Expert assessments: Consult media specialists to assess changes in the quality and accuracy of reporting by project participants.</p>
Increased diversity of voices in the media	% increase in the diversity of voices in the media	<p>Media monitoring: Analyze media content to assess the representation of diverse perspectives and voices (e.g., gender, ethnicity, political leaning).</p> <p>Focus groups: Discussions with media professionals can reveal their perceptions of changes in the diversity of voices represented in the media.</p>
Stronger and more independent media landscape	Stronger and more independent media landscape	<p>Media sustainability assessments: Analyze the financial health and independence of media outlets involved in the project.</p> <p>Legal environment assessments: Review legal frameworks and assess their impact on media freedom.</p> <p>Focus groups: Discussions with media professionals can reveal their perceptions of the media landscape and the impact of interventions on their independence.</p>
Increased awareness of the potential harm caused by misinformation	% increase in awareness of the potential harm caused by misinformation	<p>Surveys: Conduct surveys among journalists and the public to measure their understanding of the dangers of misinformation.</p> <p>Media monitoring: Analyze media coverage to assess the prominence of messages about the dangers of misinformation and its impact.</p>
Greater commitment to ethical and responsible journalism	% increase in ethical and responsible journalism	<p>Self-assessments by media outlets: Develop tools for media outlets to assess their adherence to ethical journalism codes.</p> <p>Expert reviews: Conduct reviews of media content by independent journalism experts to assess adherence to ethical standards.</p>
Reduced risk of misinformation fueling violence and human rights abuses	% decrease of risks of misinformation fueling violence and human rights abuses	<p>Tracking of violence and human rights abuses: Monitor reported incidents of violence and human rights abuses, differentiating incidents linked to misinformation from other causes.</p> <p>Media monitoring: Analyze media coverage to assess the level of reporting that incites violence or promotes harmful narratives.</p>
Increased capacity of media to counter misinformation and disinformation	% increase in the capacity of media to counter misinformation and disinformation	<p>Training assessments: Evaluate the knowledge and skills of journalists who participated in training programs on identifying and debunking misinformation.</p> <p>Focus groups: Discussions with journalists can reveal their perceptions of their ability to counter misinformation after training.</p> <p>Analysis of media content produced: Analyze the quality and effectiveness of media content produced by project participants specifically focused on countering misinformation.</p>
More responsible and accurate reporting on conflict	% increase in responsible and accurate reporting on conflict	<p>Fact-checking reports: Analyze the number of fact-checks conducted by media outlets on conflict-related information.</p> <p>Expert assessments: Consult conflict analysts and journalists to assess the accuracy and responsibility of reporting on conflict by project participants.</p>
Reduced spread of harmful narratives that can lead to violence	% decrease in the spread of harmful narratives that can lead to violence	<p>Social media listening tools: Track the prevalence of keywords associated with harmful narratives across social media platforms, focusing on a decrease in their amplification by media outlets.</p> <p>Media monitoring: Analyze media coverage to assess the prominence of harmful narratives and their framing by media outlets.</p>

OUTCOME INDICATORS AND METHODS: DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF LEGISLATION

Outcomes	Outcome indicators	Measurement methods
Development of legal frameworks that address online manipulation and hate speech	% increase of legal frameworks that address online manipulation and hate speech	<p>Review of legal frameworks: Analyze new and amended laws addressing online manipulation and hate speech, assessing their scope and potential effectiveness.</p> <p>Expert consultations: Consult legal experts to assess the clarity and enforceability of new legal frameworks.</p>
Stronger safeguards against the spread of harmful information	% increase in safeguarding measures against the spread of harmful information	<p>Review of platform policies: Analyze the content moderation policies of major social media platforms and assess changes related to harmful information.</p> <p>Focus groups: Discussions with platform representatives and civil society organizations can reveal their perceptions of changes in online safeguards.</p>
More robust legal environment for promoting a healthy information ecosystem	More robust legal environment for promoting a healthy information ecosystem	<p>Legal environment assessments: Conduct comprehensive assessments of the legal framework related to freedom of expression, access to information, and content regulation.</p> <p>Expert consultations: Consult legal and human rights experts to assess the overall health of the legal environment for a healthy information space.</p>
Effective enforcement mechanisms for existing and new laws	% increase in enforcement mechanisms for existing and new laws on MDH	<p>Tracking investigations and prosecutions: Monitor the number of investigations and prosecutions related to online manipulation, disinformation, and hate speech.</p> <p>Analysis of case outcomes: Analyze the outcomes of investigations and prosecutions to assess the effectiveness of enforcement mechanisms.</p>
Increased accountability for those who spread misinformation and disinformation	% increase in accountability for those who spread misinformation and disinformation	<p>Tracking of sanctions and penalties: Monitor the application of sanctions and penalties for violations of laws on misinformation and disinformation.</p> <p>Media monitoring: Analyze media coverage to assess the prominence of cases holding individuals accountable for spreading misinformation.</p>
Deterrence of malicious actors	% increase in deterrence activities against malicious actors	<p>Analysis of online activity: Track the activity of known malicious actors spreading misinformation and assess the impact of interventions in disrupting their operations.</p> <p>Expert consultations: Consult with cybersecurity and online manipulation specialists to assess the effectiveness of deterrence strategies.</p>
Protection of freedom of expression and other fundamental freedoms	% increase in Protection available for freedom of expression and other fundamental freedoms	<p>Review of legal frameworks: Analyze new and amended laws to assess potential restrictions on freedom of expression and other fundamental freedoms.</p> <p>Expert consultations: Consult legal and human rights experts to assess the impact of legal changes on freedom of expression.</p>
Development of solutions that address misinformation without violating human rights	% increase in the numbers of solutions that address misinformation without violating human rights	<p>Mapping of existing solutions: Identify and map existing legal and technological solutions to address misinformation without violating human rights.</p> <p>Case studies: Conduct case studies of successful interventions that balance addressing misinformation with protecting human rights.</p>
Upholding human rights in the digital space	% increase in the protection of human rights in the digital space	<p>Review of legal frameworks: Analyze legal frameworks to assess the recognition and protection of human rights in the digital space (e.g., right to privacy, freedom of expression).</p> <p>Expert consultations: Consult human rights experts to assess the impact of legal and technological developments on digital rights.</p>

Outcomes	Outcome indicators	Measurement methods
Increased diversity of voices and perspectives in the media	% increase in the diversity of voices and perspectives in the media	<p>Media monitoring: Analyze media content to assess the representation of diverse perspectives and voices (e.g., gender, ethnicity, political leaning).</p> <p>Focus groups: Discussions with media professionals can reveal their perceptions of changes in the diversity of voices represented in the media.</p>
More robust and independent media landscape	% increase in the number of independent media operating in that location	<p>Media landscape assessments: Analyze the media landscape to identify the number and types of independent media outlets operating.</p> <p>Focus groups: Discussions with media professionals can reveal their perceptions of the media landscape and the impact of interventions on media independence.</p>
Reduced risk of state control and manipulation of information	% decrease of risks of state control and manipulation of information	<p>Review of legal frameworks: Analyze legal frameworks to identify potential mechanisms for state control of information.</p> <p>Expert consultations: Consult media freedom and democracy experts to assess the risk of state manipulation of information.</p>

OUTCOME INDICATORS AND METHODS: CREATION AND STRENGTHENING OF COMMUNITY NETWORKS

Outcomes	Outcome indicators	Measurement methods
Increased participation of local communities in addressing misinformation	% increase in the participation of local communities in addressing misinformation	<p>Mapping of existing initiatives: Identify and map existing local initiatives addressing misinformation.</p> <p>Participation data: Track the number of community members participating in project activities (e.g., workshops, trainings).</p> <p>Focus groups: Discussions with community members can reveal their perceptions of their involvement in addressing misinformation.</p>
Development of context-specific solutions	% increase in the development of context-specific solutions	<p>Project documentation: Review project documents to assess the extent to which activities are tailored to address specific local contexts and challenges.</p> <p>Focus groups: Discussions with community members can reveal their perceptions of the effectiveness of interventions in addressing their specific concerns.</p>
Enhanced trust and collaboration between local and international actors	% increase in trust and collaboration between local and international actors	<p>Mapping of collaborative initiatives: Identify and map existing and new collaborative initiatives between local and international actors.</p> <p>Focus groups: Discussions with local and international actors can reveal their perception of collaboration and trust levels.</p>
Improved understanding of the challenges and opportunities related to misinformation in the conflict context	% increase in the understanding of the challenges and opportunities related to misinformation in the conflict context	<p>Surveys: Conduct surveys among community members to assess their understanding of the challenges and opportunities related to misinformation.</p> <p>Focus groups: Discussions with community members can reveal their perceptions of the most prevalent forms of misinformation and their impact.</p>
Development of effective local strategies for countering misinformation	# of effective strategies for countering misinformation developed	<p>Case studies: Conduct case studies of successful locally-driven interventions to counter misinformation, analyzing their effectiveness and replicability.</p> <p>Expert consultations: Consult with conflict resolution and misinformation specialists to assess the effectiveness of project strategies.</p>
Stronger partnerships between media, researchers, policymakers, and civil society	% increase in partnerships between media, researchers, policymakers, and civil society	<p>Mapping of partnerships: Identify and map existing and new partnerships between media, researchers, policymakers, and civil society organizations.</p> <p>Focus groups: Discussions with representatives from different sectors can reveal their perceptions of collaboration and the effectiveness of partnerships.</p>
Enhanced local capacity to address misinformation from multiple angles	% increase in capacity to address misinformation from multiple angles	<p>Skills assessments: Conduct assessments to measure the knowledge and skills of community members and other stakeholders involved in project activities (e.g., media literacy, fact-checking).</p> <p>Focus groups: Discussions with stakeholders can reveal their perceptions of their capacity to address misinformation after participating in project activities.</p>
More comprehensive and effective local interventions	% increase in the number of comprehensive and effective interventions	<p>Mapping of interventions: Identify and map existing and new interventions implemented by the project and local communities.</p> <p>Evaluation reports: Analyze project evaluation reports to assess the effectiveness and reach of interventions.</p>
Stronger and more resilient local information ecosystem	% increase in the strength and resilience of the information ecosystem	<p>Media monitoring: Analyze media coverage to assess the diversity of voices and perspectives represented, and the prominence of fact-checking and reliable information.</p> <p>Focus groups: Discussions with community members can reveal their perceptions of changes in the information environment and their ability to access reliable information.</p>

OUTCOME INDICATORS AND METHODS: POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC ENGAGEMENT

Outcomes	Outcome indicators	Measurement methods
Increased international cooperation in addressing misinformation	% increase in international cooperation in addressing misinformation	Mapping of international partnerships: Identify and map existing and new international partnerships focused on countering misinformation in conflict zones.
		Analysis of policy documents: Analyze policy documents from international organizations and national governments to assess their commitment to international cooperation on this issue.
		Focus groups: Discussions with representatives from different countries can reveal their perceptions of collaboration and progress in international cooperation.
Reduced use of misinformation as a weapon of war	% decrease in the use of misinformation as a weapon of war	Media monitoring: Analyze media coverage from various countries to assess the prevalence of messages inciting violence or promoting misinformation linked to state actors.
		Expert consultations: Consult with conflict analysts and international security specialists to assess the use of misinformation as a weapon of war.
Protection of vulnerable populations from MDH	% increase in the protection of vulnerable populations from MDH	Protection reports: Analyze reports from humanitarian organizations and UN agencies on incidents of violence against vulnerable groups linked to misinformation.
		Focus groups: Discussions with vulnerable populations can reveal their perceptions of safety and access to protection from MDH.
Reduced intergroup tensions and hostilities	% decrease in intergroup tensions and hostilities	Surveys: Conduct surveys among community members to assess their perceptions of intergroup tensions and hostilities.
		Focus groups: Discussions with community members can reveal their perceptions of the impact of interventions on reducing tensions.
Increased understanding and empathy between communities	% increase in the understanding and empathy between communities	Surveys: Conduct surveys among community members to assess their levels of understanding and empathy towards other groups.
		Focus groups: Discussions with community members from different groups can reveal their perceptions of changes in understanding and empathy.
Creation of an environment conducive to peacebuilding	Creation of an environment conducive to peacebuilding	Peacebuilding assessments: Conduct assessments of the peacebuilding environment, considering factors like trust between communities, political will, and space for dialogue.
		Expert consultations: Consult with peacebuilding specialists to assess the impact of interventions on creating a more conducive environment for peacebuilding.
More effective strategies for countering misinformation that takes into account the specific dynamics of the conflict	% increase in the effectiveness of strategies for countering misinformation that takes into account the specific dynamics of the conflict	Case studies: Conduct case studies of successful interventions that take into account the specific conflict dynamics, analyzing their effectiveness and replicability.
		Expert consultations: Consult with conflict resolution and misinformation specialists to assess the effectiveness of project strategies.
Reduced impact of misinformation on the conflict situation	% decrease of the impact of misinformation on the conflict situation	Tracking of violence and human rights abuses: Monitor reported incidents of violence and human rights abuses, differentiating incidents linked to misinformation from other causes.
		Media monitoring: Analyze media coverage to assess the level of reporting that incites violence or promotes harmful narratives.

Outcomes	Outcome indicators	Measurement methods
Increased focus on addressing the root causes of misinformation	% increase in the focus placed on addressing the root causes of misinformation	<p>Project documentation: Review project documents to assess the extent to which activities address the root causes of misinformation (e.g., lack of access to information, social inequalities).</p> <p>Focus groups: Discussions with community members can reveal their perceptions of the project's effectiveness in addressing underlying issues that fuel misinformation.</p>
Increased capacity of communities to identify, verify, and respond to misinformation	% increase in capacity of communities to identify, verify, and respond to misinformation	<p>Skills assessments: Conduct assessments to measure the knowledge and skills of community members involved in project activities (e.g., media literacy, fact-checking).</p> <p>Focus groups: Discussions with community members can reveal their perceptions of their capacity to address misinformation after participating in project activities.</p>
Stronger social fabric less susceptible to manipulation	Stronger social fabric less susceptible to manipulation	<p>Surveys: Conduct surveys among community members to assess their levels of trust in institutions and social cohesion.</p> <p>Focus groups: Discussions with community members can reveal their perceptions of changes in social cohesion and their ability to resist manipulation.</p>
Long-term solutions for promoting peace and stability	% increase in the development and implementation of long-term solutions for promoting peace and stability	<p>Mapping of interventions: Identify and map existing and new interventions implemented by the project and local communities focused on long-term peacebuilding.</p> <p>Evaluation reports: Analyze project evaluation reports to assess the sustainability and potential long-term impact of interventions.</p>

OUTCOME INDICATORS AND METHODS: TECHPLOMACY

Outcomes	Outcome indicators	Measurement methods
Increased accountability of tech companies for content moderation	% increase of accountability of tech companies for content moderation	<p>Transparency reports: Analyze transparency reports from tech companies to assess changes in content moderation policies, enforcement practices, and user appeals data.</p> <p>Expert consultations: Consult with legal and digital rights specialists to assess the effectiveness and fairness of content moderation practices.</p>
Development of technological solutions to address MDH	% increase in technological solutions to address MDH	<p>Mapping of existing solutions: Identify and map existing technological solutions developed by tech companies and other actors to address MDH (e.g., automated fact-checking tools, AI-powered detection).</p> <p>Case studies: Conduct case studies of successful technological interventions, analyzing their effectiveness and scalability.</p>
A more responsible online environment	A more responsible online environment	<p>Public opinion surveys: Conduct surveys to assess public perceptions of the online environment (e.g., safety, trust, exposure to MDH).</p> <p>Social media analysis: Analyze trends in user-generated content to assess the prevalence of hate speech, misinformation, and incivility.</p>
Increased awareness among tech companies of the specific risks	% increase in the awareness among tech companies of the specific risks	<p>Engagement with tech companies: Conduct workshops and discussions with tech companies to assess their understanding of the specific risks of MDH in different contexts (e.g., conflict zones).</p> <p>Expert consultations: Consult with conflict resolution and misinformation specialists to assess the level of awareness among tech companies.</p>
Development of conflict-sensitive policies that address the spread of misinformation without violating human rights	% increase in conflict-sensitive policies that address the spread of misinformation without violating human rights	<p>Review of content moderation policies: Analyze the content moderation policies of major tech companies to assess their inclusion of conflict-sensitive measures and safeguards for human rights.</p> <p>Expert consultations: Consult with legal and human rights specialists to assess the alignment of policies with international human rights standards.</p>
Greater accountability of tech companies for promoting a healthy online environment	% increase in the accountability of tech companies for promoting a healthy online environment	<p>Analysis of legal cases: Track legal cases holding tech companies accountable for promoting hate speech or misinformation.</p> <p>Industry reports: Analyze reports by industry bodies or regulatory agencies on the performance of tech companies in promoting a healthy online environment.</p>
Increased recognition of the international legal aspects of misinformation	% increase in the recognition of the international legal aspects of misinformation	<p>Review of international legal frameworks: Analyze developments in international law and policy related to online content regulation and misinformation.</p> <p>Expert consultations: Consult with legal and international relations specialists to assess the level of recognition of the international legal aspects of misinformation.</p>
Deterrence of malicious actors who spread misinformation for war crimes, genocide, etc.	% decrease of malicious actors who spread misinformation	<p>Analysis of online activity: Track the activity of known malicious actors spreading misinformation and assess the impact of interventions in disrupting their operations.</p> <p>Expert consultations: Consult with cybersecurity and online manipulation specialists to assess the effectiveness of measures to counter malicious actors.</p>
Stronger international cooperation in holding perpetrators accountable	% increase in international cooperation initiatives that hold perpetrators accountable	<p>Mapping of international cooperation initiatives: Identify and map existing and new initiatives focused on holding perpetrators of online misinformation accountable.</p> <p>Analysis of international policy documents: Analyze policy documents from international organizations and national governments to assess their commitment to international cooperation on this issue.</p> <p>Expert consultations: Consult with international law and governance specialists to assess the effectiveness of cooperation initiatives.</p>

SUGGESTED IMPACT MEASUREMENT INDICATORS

SUGGESTED IMPACT INDICATORS: STRENGTHENING PEOPLE'S RESILIENCE AND AGENCY TO PROTECT THEMSELVES AGAINST THE EFFECTS OF HARMFUL INFORMATION

Impact	SMART Indicators	Measurement methods	Frequency
Increased knowledge and skills in identifying and verifying information	Increase average score on a pre- and post-test assessment of media literacy skills among target communities by 10% by the end of the project.	Pre- and post-test assessments of media literacy skills among target communities	Baseline and End-line, with potential refresher assessments mid-term
Increased use of reliable information sources and fact-checking tools	Increase website traffic for fact-checking platforms or websites promoted by the project by 20% within 1 year.	Web analytics data on usage of fact-checking platforms or websites promoted by the project	Ongoing monitoring
	Increase reported use of reliable information sources (e.g., specific news outlets, official websites) by 15% among target communities by the end of the project, as measured through surveys.	Pre-and post-assessment of self-reported use of information sources by affected population	Baseline and End-line, with potential refresher assessments mid-term
Increased participation in community-led initiatives to counter misinformation	Establish at least 2 community led initiatives focused on media literacy and information resilience within the first year.	Activity report	
	Increase number of participants in community led initiatives focused on countering misinformation by 25% within 2 years.	Number and type of community-based activities focused on media literacy and information resilience	Ongoing monitoring, with in-depth case studies on successful initiatives

SUGGESTED IMPACT INDICATORS: RESPONDING TO HUMANITARIAN CONSEQUENCES AND ADDRESSING IHL AND IHRL VIOLATIONS RELATED TO HARMFUL INFORMATION

Impact	SMART Indicators	Measurement methods	Frequency
Faster and more effective response to humanitarian needs arising from misinformation	Reduce the average time to respond to humanitarian crises linked to misinformation by 15% within 1 year.	Timeliness of response to humanitarian crises linked to misinformation - Number of people reached with essential assistance	Post-incident evaluation, with baseline data on average response times
Reduced impact of misinformation on access to humanitarian assistance	Decrease the number of incidents where misinformation impedes access to aid by 50% within 2 years.	Number of incidents where misinformation impeded access to aid - Surveys of aid recipients on their access to information and services	Ongoing monitoring, with specific data collection after misinformation incidents
Increased accountability for violations of IHL and IHRL related to misinformation	Initiate at least 2 investigations or prosecutions related to misinformation that incites violence or other violations by the end of the project.	Number of investigations and prosecutions related to misinformation that incites violence or other violations	Annual reporting, with focus on cases linked to project activities

SUGGESTED IMPACT INDICATORS: PREVENTING OR MITIGATING HUMANITARIAN CONSEQUENCES DERIVING FROM HARMFUL INFORMATION

Impact	SMART Indicators	Measurement methods	Frequency
Reduced violence and human rights abuses linked to misinformation	Decrease in reported incidents of violence and human rights abuses attributed to misinformation by 20% within 1 year.	Reported incidents of violence and human rights abuses attributed to misinformation - Analysis of media content promoting violence	Quarterly, with baseline data before activities begin
Improved awareness of authorities and stakeholders about the dangers of misinformation	Increase the percentage of authorities and stakeholders who demonstrate a good understanding of the dangers of misinformation by 30% by the end of the project.	Surveys of authorities and stakeholders on their knowledge of misinformation risks	Baseline, Mid-term, End-line
Increased collaboration between stakeholders on addressing misinformation	Establish at least 3 formal partnerships between authorities, civil society, and media organizations focused on countering misinformation within the first year.	Number and type of collaborative initiatives involving authorities, civil society, and media	Ongoing monitoring

SUGGESTED IMPACT INDICATORS: ADDRESSING IMPLICATIONS OF HARMFUL INFORMATION ON TRUST IN AND INTEGRITY OF HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Impact	SMART Indicators	Measurement methods	Frequency
Improved public perception of humanitarian organizations	Increase positive perception of humanitarian organizations by 5%, measured by opinion polls by end of the project.	Opinion polls on public trust in humanitarian organizations	Baseline, Mid-term, and End-line
Reduced incidents of violence or threats against humanitarian staff	Reduce number of reported incidents of violence or threats against humanitarian staff by 10% within 1 year.	Reported incidents of violence, threats, or harassment linked to misinformation campaigns	Ongoing monitoring, with in-depth investigations of major incidents
Increased collaboration between humanitarian organizations and local communities	Establish at least 1 formal collaboration between a humanitarian organization and local community focused on improving trust and communication within the first year.	Activity report	
	Increase number of ongoing collaborative initiatives between humanitarian organizations and local communities by 2 within 2 years.	Number and type of collaborative initiatives between humanitarian actors and local communities	Ongoing monitoring

