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For All Network**

Countering Fake News and Hate Speech in Nigeria

A Guidebook For Journalists And Social Media Content Producers

NOT FOR SALE

COUNTERING FAKE NEWS
AND HATE SPEECH IN NIGERIA

A Guidebook For Journalists
And Social Media Content Producers

Written by:
Prof. Lai Oso
Dr Oluseyi Soremekun
Dr Jide Jimoh

For
Media Awareness and Information
for All Network

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2, Ladipo Street, Off Borno Way, Ebute-meta Lagos

Email: mainetwork.ng@gmail.om

Website: www.main.org.ng

Authors: Prof. Lai Oso; Dr Oluseyi Soremekun and Dr Jide Jimoh

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Background To The Guide Book

It is an indisputable fact that mass media, which today include the internet, play a very important role in the democratic process. Though it is difficult to precisely pin point their level of influence, the media contents or narratives that citizens are exposed to often influence the choices they make and the policies they support or oppose.

This is the reason scholars, policy makers, politicians and lay citizens express concern over the type and quality of offerings from the media, particularly with the widespread dissemination of fake news and hate speech. This concern is greatly heightened by the arrival of internet-based communication tools, especially social media, in Nigeria and other countries.

Over the years, Nigeria has witnessed exponential growth in access and use of the internet and social media. Individuals, socio-ethnic, religious and political groups now use social media to receive and disseminate messages without the mediating and regulatory barriers under which conventional mass media organisations and their workers operate. The country has witnessed a proliferation of citizen journalists, bloggers and social media influencers.

Social media has changed the pattern and social ecology of public communication and journalism practice. It has complicated the search for truth which is the most important task of conventional journalism. As Clay Shirky once observed, "With the internet opening the floodgates to ideological actors of all persuasions, the exhortation to seek truth and report it seems less widely practiced." (Shirky, 2014, p. 109). The internet has opened many outlets to many actors to publicise their views and opinions. News is no more the exclusive preserve of the journalists working in the organised mass media. The internet has altered the practice of journalism and some of its cherished canons and values. With the internet, Shirky has asserted, "There is no longer any way to keep partisans and fabulists out of the public sphere, nor is there any way to revoke access after heinous affront to truth-telling" (ibid, p. 14). The public sphere has not only been expanded, it has become divisive. According to a keen observer of these changes:

> The old days, where marginal opinions meant marginal availability, have given way to a world where all utterances,

true or false, are a click away…. Now public speech is accessible to brilliant people and crazy people and cantankerous people and iconoclastic people. (Shirky, 2014, p.19).

This situation becomes more worrisome and troubling in a country like Nigeria where there is no consensus on almost all things.

Despite the changes, especially in terms of access to the new channels, it appears that the country's complex social divisions and cleavages have been carried over to discussions and conversations on social media.

In a recent comment, Nobel laureate, Prof. Wole Soyinka described the conversations and comments of Nigerian youth on social media as, "Vapid, unserious, instead of argument, instead of analysis, instead of cogent approach to social problem… (They) cannot understand the magnificence of the technology."

The use of social media by Nigerians tends to follow what is available in the mainstream media: ethnic and religious laden rhetoric and discourses.

While mainstream media is, to a good extent, constrained by gate-keeping rules, legal and regulatory provisions, and professional and ethical considerations, social media has no such constraint. In fact, many of its features provide users the opportunity to feed the public often unwholesome messages. For quite some time, social media has been the major platform for the dissemination of fake news and hate speech. Many studies, and even public opinion, have established this. Hate speech and fake news are packed with lots of cultural and political meanings, with the tendency to exacerbate divisions in the society.

The possible effect of fake news and hate speech on the citizens is of major concern in a polity like Nigeria. Nigeria is a complex multi-ethnic, multi-religious country with age-long divisions that have recently exacerbated and widened as a result of political mistrust, poverty, insecurity and the absence of elite consensus on almost everything. According to a commentator, "Nigeria is a deeply fractured society in which the political elites are bitterly polarized across ethnic, religious and cultural divides. There are no common ideals or values uniting the political elites. They are so divided that getting them to agree on anything is a virtually impossible task."

A lot of inter-ethnic, inter-religious and inter-regional animosities, socio-cultural

stereotypes and abusive discourses have grown out of this divide, and this has given strength to the political "weaponization" of hate speech.

It is in light of this that this guide book is produced. Its objective is to provide media workers: journalists, bloggers, citizen journalists, and social media influencers with the knowledge and skills to handle fake news and hate speech. This Guide Book is based on the findings of a research on fake news and hate speech in social media during the 2019 Elections in Nigeria.

Social Media In Nigeria

Like mainstream media, the landscape of social media in Nigeria is quite extensive. According to the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), by the end of August 2020, internet users have reached 149.7 million while broadband penetration remained 43.3%. By 2019, there were more than 30 million Nigerian social media users. More than half of these figures are on Facebook. This is followed by Twitter users whose figures keep growing, while WhatsApp hosting groups are also very popular.

Blogging and citizen journalism has also blossomed in the country. Many mainstream newspapers have active online versions while online-only news organisations like *Premium Times* and *Sahara Reporters* also exist. The availability of internet-enabled cell phones has made access quite easy to many Nigerians, especially to the youth. Access to news and other media products are now available on-the-go.

Internet technologies have revolutionized communication and profoundly altered the media ecology. They have widened accessibility and have given the power of discussion to the people. However, despite their potential to democratise the access to and use of the media, they have also added to the crisis of public communication.
Social networking has become a major aspect of social life, interpersonal relations, political campaigns, and business transactions in the country. Many studies have highlighted the various components that characterise access to and use of social media. They include age, gender, socio-economic status and geographic rural-urban dichotomy, among others.

In Nigeria, individual political actors and ethno-religious and political groups have found social media a veritable tool for articulating and disseminating their messages, mobilizing political support, recruiting followers, advancing and/or critiquing public policies. It is obvious that such political use of social media has largely followed what obtains in mainstream media, reflecting the fractured and polarised structure of Nigerian politics and society.

Target Audience Of The Guide Book

This Guide Book is meant to sensitise media workers – journalists, bloggers, citizen journalists, social media influencers and other content producers, including comedians, to the phenomena of fake news and hate speech and their possible consequences on the polity, especially in a complex and multicultural one like Nigeria. Media workers are expected to be aware of the power inherent in the use of the media, both old and new. Therefore, they should be sensitive to the subtle nuances in the words and images they employ in conveying their messages or those used by others. Words and images do not just contain information; they convey meanings which may cut deeper than intended, especially when disseminated by mass media with their extensive reach. The interpretations and meanings audiences draw from what they encounter in the media have consequences in the type of action they take or support, their views and perspectives of others and the society in general.

Learning Objectives

The objectives of this guidebook include:

Ø To sensitise journalists on the socio-political complexity of Nigeria and the operating environment of journalism in the country;

Ø To equip journalists with skills for recognising fake news and hate speech;

Ø To provide journalists with examples of good practice for content production and dissemination;

Ø To encourage reflection on emerging trends in the journalism profession;

Ø To build the capacity of journalists to explore and analyse the dynamics of hate speech and fake news;

Ø To highlight the consequences of reporting fake news and hate speech on the Nigerian society.

FAKE
NEWS

Why fake news is of concern

Mass media, both conventional and digital, remain an important entity in societies around the world. Their importance is predicated upon their traditional roles as sources of information, tools for education and drivers of entertainment. Mass media has often been described as the Fourth Estate of the Realm due to the key role it plays in the development of a democratic society. Chapter 2, Section 22 of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution states: "The press, radio, television and other agencies of mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people." The media set the agenda for national discourse. The people depend on the media for information on what is happening in government while the government also depends on the media to feel the pulse of the people and society.

With the changing media landscape propelled by the traction gained by social media, the citizens are fast becoming content producers and ardent disseminators of news. However, a lot of the content shared by the public has turned out to be a fake. Citizen journalists are not trained and therefore do not follow the ethics of journalism. Members of the public are also quick to share contents without verifying if it is true or not.

Fake news has been of great concern as more people join the internet and get active on social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, among others. This does not imply that fake news is not found in offline media. The point is that it is commonly found on social media. Klein and Wueller (2017: 6) alluded to this when they defined it as, "The online publication of intentionally or knowingly false statements of fact." This technologically based perspective is also inherent in the definition provided by Tandoc et al. To them, it refers to viral posts based on fictitious accounts made to look like news reports (2018: 138).

Widespread fake news heats up the polity and threatens democratic governance. It results in fear and tension which jeopardises public peace and security. People have risen against people; tribes against tribes; regions against regions because of fake news peddled through online platforms by people with different motives.

Fake news erodes public trust in government and weakens community participation in governance. It hurts people, destroys personalities, and has the tendency to cause violence in the society. McGonagle (2017) also observes that fake news is potent in fuelling propaganda, hate speech and even violence.

What Is Fake News?

According to Google Trends graph, the term 'Fake News' started trending around 2016 and peaked between 15 – 21 March 2020. This was obviously during the period of widespread misinformation about the COVID-19 pandemic. Nigeria is ranked 22 among countries with interest in 'fake news' and Lagos, FCT and Rivers lead respectively amongst the States. The term has become a cliché on the lips of many and trends without end. Its usage is common in the political circle just as it remains a burning phenomenon amongst communication scholars and professionals. The more it is widely and randomly used, the more its borders become blurry and obliterated. The University of Michigan Library Research Guides aptly declares, "The universe of 'fake news' is much larger than simply false news stories."

"Fake news has no straight forward or commonly understood meaning because news means verifiable information in the public interest, and information that does not meet these standards does not deserve the label of news. In this sense then, 'fake news' is an oxymoron which lends itself to undermining the credibility of information which does indeed meet the threshold of verifiability and public interest, i.e. real news." Irenton and Pose (2018:7)

They further stressed that to better understand cases involving exploitative manipulation of the language and conventions of news genres, "this publication treats these acts of fraud for what they are - as a particular category of phony information within increasingly diverse forms of disinformation, including in entertainment formats like visual memes." Irenton and Pose (2018:7)

Fake news can simply be defined as the deliberate production and dissemination of misleading contents for purposes other than public good. In other words, it is a deliberate act to misinform members of the public about a particular issue, concept or phenomenon.

Verstraete, et al (2017), identify several distinct types of fake news based on two defining features: intention to deceive readers and financial or non-financial motivations, as follows:

Satire: false content which is financially motivated but not intended to deceive readers.

Hoax: false content which is financially motivated and intended to deceive readers.

Propaganda: biased or false content motivated by an attempt to promote a political cause or point of view, and intended to deceive the reader.

Trolling: biased or false content motivated by an attempt to get personal humour value (the lulz), and intended to deceive the reader.

UNESCO (2018) further observed that a range of factors are transforming the communications landscape, raising questions about the quality, impact and credibility of journalism. At the same time, orchestrated campaigns are spreading untruths - disinformation, mal-information and misinformation - that are often unwittingly shared on social media:

Disinformation: Information that is false and deliberately created to harm a person, social group, organisation or country.

Misinformation: Information that is false but not created with the intention of causing harm.

Mal-information: Information that is based on reality, used to inflict harm on a person, social group, organisation or country.

Critical Themes
Of Fake News

THEMES	HOW TO ADDRESS IT	REPORTERS' GUIDE
Satire/ Parody	This sometimes is a false story presented with humour and as truth. Sometimes, it does not pass as fake news but mostly fools the readers. Be aware it is a satire/ parody	As a comedic critique, satire has a high propensity for fake and half-truth elements embedded. Reporters should read between the lines always. Take cognisance of possible misinterpretation of satires. Carefully choose your words in a context understandable to the audience. Do not use satires and innuendoes to promote contents that are false or half-truth. **Example:** Breaking news: shocking. UN publishes 1st quarter Demography Report 2019 There are 7.8 billion people on the planet (Earth). **The reports shows** Women = 5.6 Billion Men = 2.2 Billion So, they advised women to be careful in showing attitudes to any man because out of the 2.2 Billion men:

| | | One billion are married already. 130 million are in prison. 70 million are mentally ill. That means we have just about 1 billion men available for marriage and out of the 1 Billion: 50% are jobless 3% are gay 5% are Catholic Priests 10% are your relatives 32% are above 66 years So ladies, both the married and the single, you have to rethink before treating any man like trash.
For details, visit UN demography report
https://www.independent.ng/breaking-un-publishes-1st-quarter-demography-report-2019/

"No, this is not UN report on world's population" AFP FactCheck confirmed and explained, "Posts claiming to quote a United Nations (UN) report identified as the First Quarter Demography Report 2019 are circulating in Africa. The posts are false. UN officials told AFP that the organization does not publish a quarterly demographic report. It releases World Population Prospects every 3-4 years and the 2019 report estimates that there are 3.824 billion women and 3.889 billion men globally." |
| **Hoax** | Source information from multiple sources. Carry out proper fact checking. Fact checking sites: | Ethical reporting must be upheld at all times.
 "When in doubt, check, when still in doubt, leave out."

There is no room for hoax in journalism. |

| | Peoplescheck.com
Africa Check: africacheck.org
News Checker: https://newschecker.in/
Snopes: snopes.com/
PolitiFact: politifact.com
Fact Check: factcheck.org/
BBC Reality Check: bbc.com/news/reality-check
Channel 4 Fact Check: channel4.com/news/factcheck
Reverse image search from Google: google.com/reverse-image-search | Use the **CRAAP test (Currency, Relevance, Accuracy, Authority and Purpose)** developed by Sarah (2004), to check the objectivity and reliability of sources.[vii]

Examples:

1. A few COVID-19 hoaxes:
• Corona virus stays in the throat for four days and to get rid of it before it reaches the lungs, drink hot water and inhale hot water steam.
• COVID-19 is spread by 5G ultrafast wireless technologies and the Government imposed a lockdown to allow the mass installation of 5G infrastructure. This circulated widely on social media at the onset of the COVID-19 lockdown. As a result, many telecom base stations were reportedly vandalized in the UK and around the world.
• Another circulated hoax about COVID-19 was that one could fend off or treat the virus by keeping one's body warm and drinking alcohol.
• COVID-19 was deliberately developed by Chinese laboratories - with the purpose of overcoming the country's demographic crisis or other purposes such as biological warfare.
• Holding your breath for 10 seconds or more without coughing or feeling discomfort means you are free from the corona virus disease (COVID-19) or any other lung disease.

2. Viral social media posts surfaced online on 8 October 2020, suggesting that Nigeria's former Minister of Finance, Okonjo Iweala has been appointed as the new and first female Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO). This claim is false. Dr Okonjo Iweala alongside Yoon Myung-Hee has only been shortlisted for the final round of the selection process. (People's Check)

 |

| | | 3. "Breaking news! Ram tested positive for Corona virus in Niger State," says a post shared on Facebook on 12 July 2020. The post shows a photo of a ram – a male goat – with its legs tied together, receiving an intravenous infusion. Niger state is in Nigeria's North Central geopolitical zone. Does the photo really show a ram infected with Covid-19? No. Africa Check reported that "No evidence of ram tested positive for Covid-19 in Northern Nigeria." The report further established that the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control's communication team confirmed no animal testing had been done in the country. None of its laboratories had reported anything like a goat testing positive for Covid-19. (Africa Check)
| | | 4. A viral photo showing a group of young men digging up a tarred road has appeared on the Nigerian social media space suggesting they are EndSARS protesters destroying a road in Nigeria. A fact check by Peoplescheck.org reveals that the claim is false. The photograph was not taken in Nigeria. It was taken in Kwazulu-Natal, a province of South Africa during a protest. (People's Check)
| | | 5. The following report by BBC provides another example of using photographs not related to the incident being reported: *"Fake pictures circulating on social media which users are falsely claiming depict inter-communal violence are inflaming already high tensions in Nigeria. It comes after three days of violence left more than 200 people dead in the centre of the country.*

A gruesome image of a woman face down in a pool of blood with a gaping shoulder wound is purported to be from the recent attacks. It has hundreds of retweets on Twitter, but it first appeared on the internet in 2011 in a story about domestic violence in Nigeria.

Another image appears to show half a dozen people that were killed in the attacks. On closer inspection it becomes clear that the picture was not taken in Nigeria, and is actually the scene of a 2015 traffic accident in the Dominican Republic.

		They are both too graphic for us to display and were accompanied by highly inflammatory comments." ([BBC])
Propaganda	This is an attempt to push a political agenda and the story could be sugar-coated lies. A reporter should recognise when a story has the trappings of partisans who want to influence political beliefs and policy making. Develop your capacity to identify truth and discern bias. Simply look for bias.	These questions must be answered: What is the central idea of the news story/ feature? Does the write-up whip up emotions? Is it likely to evoke strong emotional reactions from a section of the public? Are the claims in the story backed by evidences that are verifiable? Is the story framed or slanted in a way that readers are railroaded to think in a certain direction and form a certain opinion? What are the other news channels saying about the issue/ topic? **Examples:** 1. A video with Channels Television station identity went viral on Saturday, October 10, 2020, claiming that violence had erupted at a polling unit in Ondo State and that the wife of the state governor, Betty Akeredolu, was injured. Channels Television reacted to the viral video and labelled it as "Fake News." The TV station tweeted that the video was doctored and it was not part of its coverage of the Ondo 2020 Governorship Election. They further stated that the original video happened a few years ago and provided a link to it. (https://twitter.com/channelstv/status/1314886479378886656) 2. Claims that President Muhammadu Buhari has died and has been replaced by a lookalike surfaced around September 2017. The rumour started when he was on medical trip to London for an undisclosed illness. The theory went that the president, who was running for re-election in February 2019, had been replaced with a look-alike from Sudan named Jubril. He was even said to have been cloned. In separate broadcasts on his station, Radio Biafra, Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) has repeated the claim and called the lookalike "Jubril Al-Sudani." **On each occasion, Kanu gave no evidence for the claim**.

		AFP Fact-check concluded that, "There's no evidence that Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari has died and been replaced by a lookalike." AFP Fact Check. No doubt, this is propaganda at play ahead of the 2019 elections.
		3. In February 2020, the IPOB leader Nnamdi Kanu stirred another controversy when he alleged that Atiku Abubakar, the presidential candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), is not "originally" a Nigerian, and that he is a Cameroonian. However, a fact check by Premium Times concludes that the PDP presidential candidate is legally a Nigerian as Jada (formerly in British Cameroons) became a full Nigerian territory after the plebiscite 59 years ago. This was brought up less than one month to the elections for no reason other than propaganda. (Premium Times)
		4. In 2017, Biafra separatists attempting to disrupt the Anambra governorship vote claimed the army was injecting school students with monkey pox to depopulate the South East, leading some schools to close and parents to withdraw their children in panic. It was propaganda to demonise and discredit the Nigerian Army.
Clickbait	These are misleading headlines aimed to entice a reader to click a hyperlink to read a purported story. It is about distorting the truth. In most cases the story is different from the headline. Be aware that there are fake websites. Develop a nose for deceptive headlines. Sensationalism has always been part of journalism	Note: If the headline seems sensational, the story is probably untrustworthy.

Check the source of the link.

In 2017, Facebook began to flag fake news or as Facebook calls it: "disputed" news. Facebook is worried about the use of its platform by bloggers to "deceive" readers. "We're making an update to News Feed ranking to further reduce clickbait headlines. We are updating News Feed by using a system that identifies phrases that are commonly used in clickbait headlines," Facebook research scientist, Alex Peysakhovich, and User Experience Researcher, Kristin Hendrix, said. .https://about.fb.com/news/2016/08/news-feed-fyi-further-reducing-clickbait-in-feed/

Examples of Clickbait
1. During the transfer football window of 2020, reports emerged in a few publications under the headline, "Arsenal confirms deal for Marcelo." A |

		few tweets also surfaced with the photo of Marcelo Viera of Real Madrid. However, a click on the headline revealed that the Marcelo signed by the English club was not the popular Real Madrid player but a 17-year old Marcelo Flores who just signed his first professional contract with the club having joined Arsenal as a scholar from Ipswich in the summer of 2019. 2. "Nigeria gave cash donations to all its citizens" was a headline of a widely reported story during the COVID-19 lockdown of 2020. According to AFP fact-check, "An article shared more than 14,000 times on Facebook claims the Nigerian government gave N20, 000 ($52) to "everyone" across the country's 36 states. This is false. The article in question shares a true story but uses an unrelated and misleading headline. Nigeria has a social investment programme to help the poor and handed out cash and food during the lockdown, but not to all citizens." ([Africa Check](#))
Imposter content:	This is when genuine sources are impersonated. Many quotations and posts have been deliberately and wrongly credited to notable personalities such as Prof Wole Soyinka, Mr Peter Obi, etc.	The pertinent questions to ask include: Are the claims in the story verifiable? Is there any news organisation that published the story? Examples 1. "Prof. Wole Soyinka: If APC is not the answer to our problems, there is no reason going back to the instigators of the problem. I'm not a politician but I would do everything not to have PDP in government in Nigeria." Nobel laureate, Professor Wole Soyinka, has denied making these statements and many others credited to him on the socio-political and economic situation of the country. The denial was issued by Soyinka's media aide, Mr. Jahman Anikulapo, insisting that the statements were made by mischief makers who he said had become more daring, using social media. ([The Crest](#)) 2. A report had emerged in 2016 that Nobel laureate, Prof. Wole Soyinka, had endorsed President Muhammadu Buhari's one year in office. However, Prof Soyinka denied the report quoting him as declaring his support to Buhari as a "disgusting forgery." "Once again, I notify the security arms of Nigeria about this increasingly

but it should not be taken to the extreme and to the extent of misrepresentation and deception.

		obsessed exercise in identity forgery," Soyinka said in the brief statement.(Qed)
Deepfakes and Visual Deception	This is a machine learning model that is used to create realistic yet fake or manipulated audio and video. Examples are celebrities' faces superimposed into pornographic videos; grafting someone's expression unto another person's head Deepfakes enhances prejudices and reinforces biases. Journalists should be aware that Deepfakes technology can be weaponized against political personalities or parties, as well as celebrities, with a view to manipulating public opinion. Through augmented reality and filters, faces of people could	This is a no-go area in journalism. With the convergence of platforms in modern-day journalism, journalists should tarry, and fact-check videos before using them as sources of news stories. However, a technical story to unmask the deceptive elements of the deepfakes technology is desirable. Examples: 1. A three-second video that has been heavily shared on social media appears to show Nigeria's minister of education, Adamu Adamu, saying all schools in the country will reopen on 7 September 2020. Africa Check reports that "this is untrue – the video is old and doctored." (Africa Check) 2. Footage of uniformed men firing gunshots to disperse a mob has been shared thousands of times on social media purporting to show violence during Nigeria's 2020 elections in Ondo state. However, the claim is false; the video was filmed in a different part of the country in 2018 and is unrelated to the state poll. AFP Fact Check found that the TV banner (Channels Television logo) was digitally manipulated to include misleading text.(AFP Fact Check)

	be swapped, and age in a photo could be increased by as much as 20 years.	
Bots	Bot, a short word for robot, is a computer application that carries out repetitive tasks as humans on the internet. Sometimes, "fake news" contents may be generated and shared widely by "bots."	According to Imperva, "Bots are operated on social media networks, and used to automatically generate messages, advocate ideas, act as a follower of users, and as fake accounts to gain followers themselves. It is estimated that 9-15% of Twitter accounts are social bots." **Identifying Bots** **Sudden surge in traffic** — An unusual surge in traffic to the site is a signal that bots are at work. **New User Traffic sources**—When the sources of the traffic surge are new users. **Strange geographical locations**—When people driving traffic to your page are from geographical locations you did not target. **Unexpected Language** —When hits on your site/page are from people using languages your primary audience do not use.

How Should Journalists Handle Fake News? (Advice And Good Practices)

In assessing if content is false or not, journalists should apply the CRAAP test (Currency, Relevance, Accuracy, Authority and Purpose).

Currency: the timeliness of the information

- When was the information published or posted?
- Has the information been revised or updated?
- Is the information current or out-of-date for your topic?
- Are the links functional?

Relevance: the importance of the information for your needs

- Does the information relate to your topic or answer your question?
- Who is the intended audience?
- Is the information at an appropriate level (i.e. not too elementary or advanced for your needs)?
- Have you looked at a variety of sources before determining this is the one you will use?
- Would you be comfortable using this source for a research paper?

Authority: the source of the information

- Who is the author/publisher/source/sponsor?
- Are the author's credentials or organizational affiliations given?
- What are the author's qualifications to write on the topic? Can they be verified?
- Is there contact information, such as a publisher or e-mail address?
- Does the URL reveal anything about the author or source?

Accuracy: the reliability, truthfulness, and correctness of the content

- Where does the information come from?
- Is the information supported by evidence?
- Has the information been reviewed or refereed?
- Can you verify any of the information in another source or from personal knowledge?
- Does the language or tone seem biased and full of emotion?
- Are there spelling, grammar, or other typographical errors?


Purpose: the reason the information exists

- What is the purpose of the information? To inform? Teach? Sell? Entertain? Persuade?
- Do the authors/sponsors make their intentions or purpose clear?
- Is the information fact? Opinion? Propaganda?
- Follow the money. Who stands to gain from this?
- Does the point of view appear objective and impartial?
- Are there political, ideological, cultural, religious, institutional, or personal biases?
- What clues does the format give to the purpose, audience, and quality?

Note: the CRAAP test was developed by Sarah Blakeslee and her team of librarians at California State University, Chico (CSU Chico).

On 21 May 2020, the United Nations launched "Verified", an initiative to combat the growing scourge of COVID-19 misinformation by increasing the volume and reach of trusted, accurate information. The campaign, though borne out of the COVID-19 pandemic, is adaptable for other thematic areas. It requires everyone to consider the 5 Ws before sharing contents online. This is represented below:

Source: https://content.shareverified.com/en/2020/06/29/5-ws/
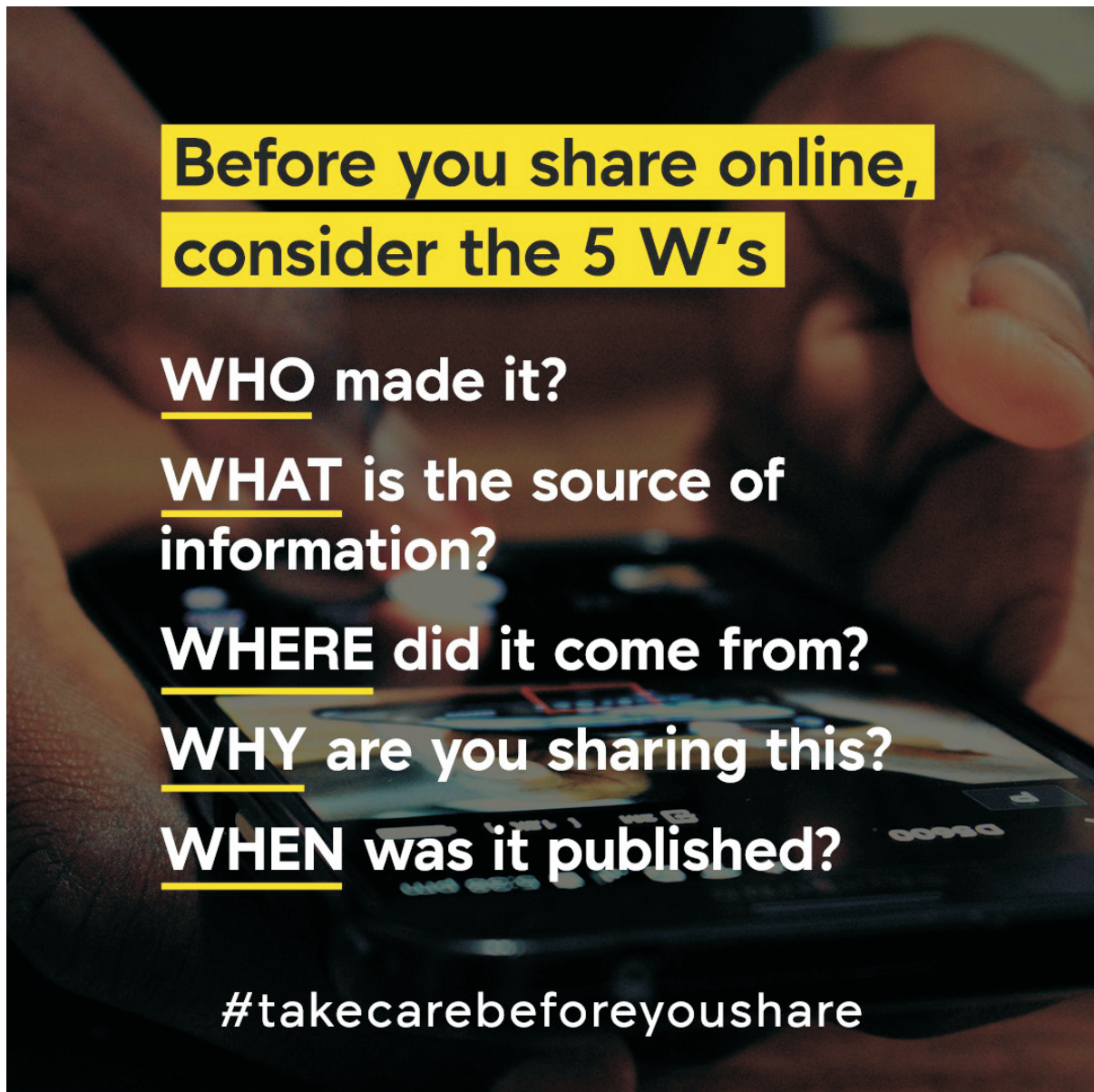
PART TWO

HATE
SPEECH

Why Hate Speech is of Concern

Hate speech has the capacity to tear apart the very fabric of society. The negative consequences of hate speech have been manifested in mutual distrust, hatred, prejudice, social exclusion, dehumanisation, violence, loss of lives and property, and war.

Many of the hate crimes known to man have been preceded by hate speech: The Nazis labelled Jews as rats and vermin before the holocaust that saw the extermination of about six million Jews. Before the Rwandan genocide in 1994, Tutsi people were labelled cockroaches. Some leaders of the Ogoni people in Nigeria's Niger Delta were described as vultures feeding on the people and were subsequently killed in an uprising. At the individual level, victims of hate speech have been known to have lost their sense of humanity, and sometimes, committed suicide. The negative effect of hate speech is pervasive and it is without any redeeming feature, hence the concern.

What is Hate Speech?

Hate speech is not a recent phenomenon but like fake news, has been enhanced by the coming of the internet and the attendant democratisation of the means of information gathering and dissemination through social media. In response to the prevalence of hate speech in the political discourse in Nigeria, government has, among other responses, proposed to legislate against hate speech, and amidst strident criticism has proposed the death penalty for certain categories of hate speech. Nigeria's Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed has been strident in his fight against hate speech. For him, only a strong legislation against hate speech will suffice. While the legislative struggle was still on at the National Assembly, the minister got an opportunity through an amendment to the 6th Edition of Nigerian Broadcasting Code of 2019. In launching the code on 4th August, 2020, the Minister noted that one of the highlights was, "The provision raising the fine for hate speech from 500,000 Naira to Five Million Naira." (Mohammed: 2020). Thus, the debate about how to curb hate speech continues. Neither the government nor the society has reached an agreement on what constitutes hate speech. Can there be legislation against a phenomenon that has not been properly defined? As CITAD (2018:1) notes, "There is the danger that given the lack of clarity of what hate speech means across actors, the hate speech narrative could be used to either stifle freedom of speech or silence criticism of government, including political opposition."

When confronted with the definitional conundrum, Media Foundation for West Africa MFWA (2014: 8-10), used the word 'indecent expression' under which hate speech was a category. They define indecent expression as, "Any statement or insinuation that sought to attack or damage the reputation of an individual, political party, or ethnic group; or that could provoke the target to react in an unpleasant or offensive manner; or that could offend the sensibilities of members of the public." It goes further to identify 12 categories of speeches under this definition: insult, prejudice and bigotry, inflammatory expressions, incitement, expletives, hate speech, tribal slurs and stereotyping, provocative remarks, unsubstantiated allegations, gender-specific insults, divisive expressions, and innuendo. Hate speeches, according to MFWA, are insults which are said against a group of people based on their ethnicity, religion or party affiliation to degrade and/or offend them and hold them out to public scorn and hatred." The study by MFWA found a total of 509 indecent remarks on radio stations during the election campaign in Ghana in 2012.

In another publication, CITAD (2017) had adopted the definition by Benesch who proposed the term 'dangerous speech' as that segment of hate speech that has the propensity to catalyse violence. Thus, CITAD declared hate speech to be speech that:

1. Insults people for their religion;
2. Abuses people for their ethnic or linguistic affiliations;
3. Expresses contempt against people because of their place of origin;
4. Disparages or intimidates women or girls because of their gender;
5. Condones discriminatory assertions against people living with disability;
6. Abuses or desecrates symbols of cultural or religious practices;
7. Denigrates or otherwise ridicules traditional or cultural institutions of other people (CITAD 2017:3).

Thus, the test for hate speech should consider the content and context of use. Specifically, it must meet certain standards. The following test developed by the Ethical Journalism Network (EJN) and based on international standards highlights questions in the gathering, preparation and dissemination of news and helps place what is said and who is saying it in context:

1. **Status of the Speaker**

   - How might their position influence their motives?

   - Should they even be listened to or just ignored?

2. **Reach of the Speaker**

- How far is the speech travelling?

- Is there a pattern of behaviour?

3. **Goals of the Speech**

- How does it benefit the speaker and their interests?

- Is it deliberately intended to cause harm to others?

4. **The Content itself**

- Is the speech dangerous?

- Could it incite violence towards others?

5. **Surrounding Climate -- Social/Economic/Political**

- Who might be negatively affected?

- Is there a history of conflict or discrimination?

- https://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org

It does not mean that all the seven conditions mentioned above must be presentat once for a speech to qualify as hate speech; two or more of these conditionscan trigger the consequences of hate speech.

Given that a precise and universal definition of hate speech may not be feasible, the set of standards for its determination provides a better route in interrogating the concepts of hate speech and that has been applied in this guide book.
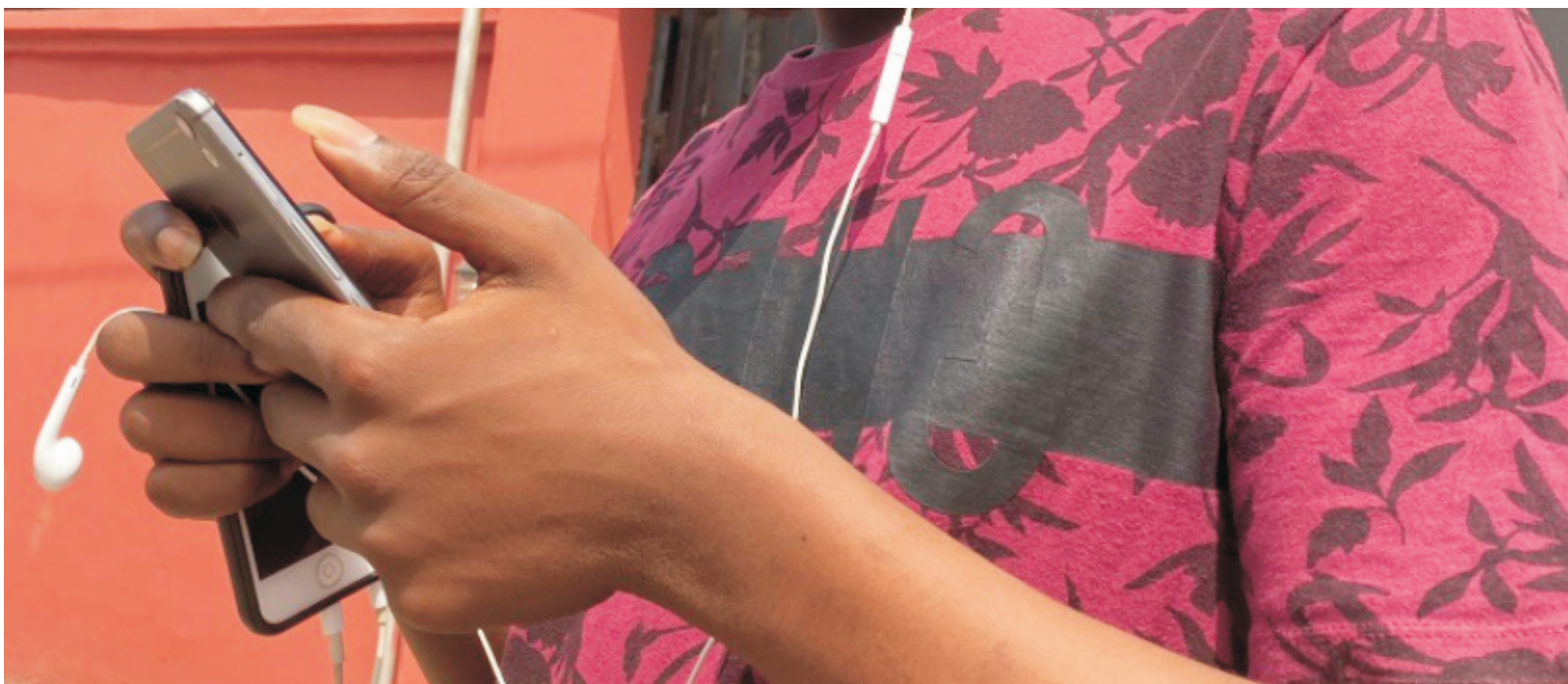
The Nigerian
Social Media Landscape

The social media landscape in Nigeria is very active. The Global State of Digital in 2019 reports that there are 98.39 million internet users in Nigeria, "compared to January 2018, there has been a 4 million increase in the number of internet users." (https://www.pulse.ng). With the wider availability of information and communication technologies which has enhanced more platforms for social interaction, the landscape is vibrant. Social media has been defined as "a collection of internet websites services and practices that support collaboration, community building, participation and sharing." (Otieno and Matoke 2014). Facebook, as at March 2018, had 28 million users in Nigeria (CITAD 2017: 22).

Politicians have increasingly turned to social media to enhance their visibility and communication with the electorates, especially the younger generation. In the campaign leading to the 2011 general elections in Nigeria, Goodluck Jonathan, the presidential candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) relied heavily on Facebook. This culminated in the publication of a book, *My Friends and I*, which celebrated the perceived success of his interaction on social media platforms and the subsequent elections in 2015. 2019 witnessed more politicians across parties making use of social media. The more popular ones used by them include Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp.

It is no surprise then that the battle to win followers and sway them from opposition was increasingly sought on social media platforms. In the process, fake news and hate speech, misinformation, disinformation and other negative communication dominated the social media landscape. Thus, the need for solutions to the negative effects becomes more imperative.

Critical Themes Of Hate Speech

THEMES	HOW TO ADDRESS IT	REPORTERS' GUIDE
Ethnic slurs and stereotyping	Language must be carefully selected to give accurate representations.	Avoid bias. Be sensitive to the sensibilities of various ethnic nationalities. Avoid the use of negative descriptions. Be empathetic in reporting. Be objective, fair, truthful, balanced and accurate. Pass contents through ethnic lens. Call individuals what they call themselves. **Examples:** 1. "Killer-herdsmen Symbol on the new Nigerian Passport: Implications," and "Nigeria: New Nigeria Passport Has Herdsmen Inscribed on It - Apostle Suleiman Alerts," were two of the many headlines of a story that circulated in July 2019. The General Overseer of the Omega Fire Ministries, Apostle Johnson Suleiman, has alerted that the new Nigerian passport has herdsmen inscribed on it. He said it was shameful how a certain extraction of Nigerians could now represent the 6 geopolitical zones in the country,

saying everything is now clear that there is a 'fulanization' agenda being aimed at Nigeria. However, fact-checks revealed that tribes from all the regions of Nigeria have their images in silhouette on the Nigerian Passport. ([Nigeria World](); [Vanguard]())

2. **Northerners have looted Nigeria more than other regions – Fani-Kayode replies El-Rufai.** Femi Fani-Kayode, former Aviation minister, has asserted that Northerners have looted Nigeria more than any other region…We have to speak the truth to ourselves and ask why is it that northern Nigeria has development indicators similar to Afghanistan, a country still at war?...[Daily Post]() (July 8, 2019)
3. The fight for resource control in the Niger Delta has given rise to ethnic stereotyping against Niger Deltans. People are quick to label them 'militants'.
4. One Obidike Nze, a follower of former presidential aide, Reno Omokri on Instagram, wrote that Yorubas are cowards. Replying the follower, Reno Omokri revealed that Yorubas are the bravest Nigerians which can be seen in Olusegun Obasanjo and the late Tunde Idiagbon. According to him, the belief that Yorubas are cowards is a false stereotype. Too often, non Yorubas have confused strategy for cowardice. Please be guided and stop spreading this lie." [AB-TC News]()

Not all herdsmen are killers. Not all Fulanis are herders. Not all Niger Deltans are militants. Not all Northerners are looters. Not all Yorubas are cowards.

Unsubstantiated allegations	Source information from multiple sources. Carry out proper fact checking	Ethical reporting. "When in doubt, check, when still in doubt, leave out." Be socially responsible. Present all sides of the story. Avoid proclamations that foster provocative and divisive tendencies. Use expressions that promote national cohesion, peace building, and positive intergroup relations. **Examples:** In October 2019, Sadiya Umar Farouq, Nigeria's Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster

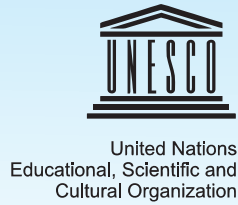|		Management and Social Development was rumoured to have married Nigerian President, Muhammadu Buhari in a 'secret marriage' at a time when there were reports of disagreement between the president and his first lady, Aisha Buhari. However, the Presidency **refuted** claims of the said marriage between the president and the minister stating that it was a 'rumour.' ([Daily Post](#))
Provocative, derogatory and divisive expressions	Avoid emotive words. Be accurate and precise, avoid language that misrepresent and offend the sensibility of various nationalities, religious groups and interest.	Examples: • **Atiku vs Buhari: APC Members Have 'No Brain' – Fani-Kayode Replies El-Rufai's Statement On Peter Obi.** Femi Fani-Kayode, the former Minister of Aviation has said those members still in the All Progressives Congress, APC, have 'no brain'...[Sahara Reporters](#) Reacting to El-Rufai's statement, Fani-Kayode insisted that those left in the ruling party have 'no brain as it has been replaced with 'Cow Dung'. • "…El-Rufai said although North was the most backward and uneducated region in Nigeria, it was a thing of pride that Northerners are rarely arrested for Yahoo-Yahoo and other financial crimes. El-Rufai had said: "Nigeria consists of two countries; there is a backward, less educated and unhealthy northern Nigeria, and a developing, largely educated and healthy southern Nigeria. We have to speak the truth to ourselves and ask why is it that northern Nigeria has development indicators similar to Afghanistan, a country still at war." - Daily Post (July 8, 2019)
Gender related insults	Voices should include voices of the socially excluded (women, PLWDs, children). Contents should reflect fairness to all genders (images and voices). Contents should promote	Ensure that contents represent the voices, experiences, actions, current realities, views and consents of the socially excluded. Reports should not promote demeaning social constructs (of the socially excluded). Promote the strength and relevance of inclusivity in societal development and decision making for inclusive development and sustainability. Examples • *Nigeria isn't ripe for a female president* *"Dr Ego Obioha* is the founder of Women Foundation of Nigeria. Speaking to *Ruth Choji-Tafida*, she declared that Nigeria is not yet ripe for a female president, and advised women to go

	the strengths of the socially excluded and consciously seek their voices	back to the drawing board." - https://allafrica.com/stories/201101241446.html
Religious prejudice	Avoid the 'us and them' construct. Promote the indivisibility of the supreme being.	Avoid privileging one religion over another through 'the only way' narrative. Use reports to promote religious harmony and tolerance. Uphold the multi-religious nature of the country. Avoid religious bias in reports. Carefully choose your words in a context understandable to the audience. Understand and accommodate the belief system of others. Avoid words that denigrate other belief systems. Examples At the onset of the Boko Haram insurgency, many erroneously tagged Muslims, especially those from the North as terrorists or Boko Haram until mosques started going under attacks and Muslims at Jumat were murdered by the insurgents.
Satires and innuendoes	Understand the nature of satires and innuendoes. Avoid the use of derogatory images.	Take cognisance of possible misinterpretation of satires. Carefully choose your words in a context understandable to the audience. Do not use satires and innuendoes to promote religious prejudice, bigotry and other divisive tendencies.
Disparaging traditional or cultural institutions	Respect traditional and cultural institutions. Promote the importance of traditional and cultural institutions.	Promote the place of traditional cultural institutions in peace building and national development. Do not use language that denigrates traditional and cultural institutions.
Incitement to hatred	Understand the individual and group differences in society. Be sensitive to their aspirations, peculiarities	Reports should be conflict-sensitive and reflect unity in diversity. Avoid expressions that can promote or incite violence against any group. Avoid language that will misrepresent any group. Contents must provide balanced views of various groups. Data used for contents must be presented using a peace building lens.

	and sensibilities. No group is superior to the other. Do not promote sectionalism of any group's aims, objectives and aspiration above the collective will of others in the society.	Actively seek voices that promote harmony and peace building in your report. Peace building and national harmony cohesion should be emphasized early in programme and news planning. Contents must be designed specifically to promote peace and national cohesion. It must also emphasize issues that bind us. The media should join the larger early warning system. Newsroom diversity should be promoted. It must also be conscious of national security because without peace, journalists may not be able to practice their profession.

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