Last week, the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD’s) newsletter examined the dangers of disinformation (fake news) to the corporate existence of Nigeria as a nation. While fake news is not a new phenomenon, over time, the spread of disinformation has taken various dimensions. To survive the times, one must be cautious of claims or narratives that come in the form of advisory and how to do things. Individuals should also be able to differentiate between real news and fake news especially on social media.

Here are five steps to identify fake news on social media:

1. **DOES IT SOUND SENSATIONAL OR CAUSE YOU TO REACT?**

   Fake news is usually written to create “shock value,” that is, a strong automatic reaction such as anger or fear. Disinformation can be spread using many of the same tactics as misinformation—hoaxes, click-bait, fabricated reports. Disinformation is created to deceive so we need to approach content on social media with a critical mind.

2. **CHECK THE SOURCE**

   You can do this by answering the following questions: have you come across a story from that source or heard of it before, does the web address for the page look suspicious, or is it mimicking a known web address? Check spelling errors in company names, or unfamiliar extensions like “.infornt” and “.offer,” rather than “.com” or “.co.uk, or ‘.org” may mean that the source is suspect.

3. **CHECK TO SEE IF OTHER SOURCES ARE REPORTING THE STORY**

   You can do this by searching for similar content on search engines. If it’s an image, you can do a reverse image search using [www.images.google.com](http://www.images.google.com) or [www.tineye.com](http://www.tineye.com)

4. **EXAMINE THE EVIDENCE**

   Credible news sources train their journalists to include plenty of facts – quotes from experts, survey data and official statistics and detailed eye-witness accounts that are consistent and corroborated from people on the scene. If these are missing, question the story or narratives it trying to spread!
5. BE CURIOUS OF IMAGES

There are now a thousand and one applications online and in use that can be used to alter, doctor or even recreate images and videos. This editing software has made it easy for people to create fake images that look real and not many can tell if an image is fake. When in doubt, check for more details about the image. You can also do a reverse image search using www.images.google.com or www.tineye.com to check where an image was created and whether it has been altered.

Fake news on social media may be unavoidable especially with the unprecedented volume of disinformation being circulated in Nigeria and globally. But you can help stop the spread by thinking critically. Maintain a healthy level of curiosity for what you read on your timeline, understand that social media platforms curate what you see based on an algorithm derived from data gathered from your online behaviours. What this means is that the news you see on your feed is filtered based on previously collected data and this awareness can help you become more conscious of your own inherent bias.

If platforms notice that you frequently quick to click on stories that say COVID-19 is a scam, for example, more of such news will appear on your timeline.

FACT-CHECKS

In view of this the CDD countered a couple of false claims using fact-checking tools in the past week. One of such is the claim that some Fulanis residents in Kano have been asked to vacate the State.

The claim read in parts “Hausas in Kano have asked the Fulanis to leave northern Nigeria while breaking the exclusive Fulani mosque. Behold the Ottoman Dan Fodio prophecy of about 220 years is happening before our very eyes. DAN.”
Also attached to the claim was a video of people seen vandalizing a mosque.

Investigations carried out by CDD revealed that the claim that Fulanis have been asked to vacate Kano State is false.

More checks showed that the video attached to the broadcast was from a clash in Billiri Local Government Area of Gombe State and not from Kano as claimed.

Read the full fact check here

HAS WHO MADE A U-TURN ON ISOLATION AND SOCIAL DISTANCING?

On February 25, 2021, fact-checkers at the Centre spotted a WhatsApp broadcast claiming that the World Health Organisation (WHO) has completely made a U-turn on Coronavirus (COVID-19) protocols and guidelines.

The broadcast claimed that the international health body made a declaration that individuals infected with COVID-19 do not need to be isolated or quarantined as the virus cannot be transmitted from one patient to another.

Checks by CDD show that the claim that WHO has declared that individuals infected with COVID-19 need not isolate is false. An investigation carried out by CDD fact-checkers reveals that the claim is not new and had trended on July 16, 2020.

The broadcast resurfaced on WhatsApp has continued to be spread across groups on the platform.

Further checks show in its advice on preventive measures against COVID-19, the WHO has continued to urge the public to public themselves and their loved ones by taking some simple precautions, such as physical distancing and wearing a mask.

Also, WHO notes that keeping rooms well ventilated, avoiding crowds, cleaning your hands, and coughing into a bent elbow or tissue is imperative in protecting oneself and others.

Read the full fact check
EVENTS

Last week, the CDD supported the Joiz Orphans and Widows Initiative (JOWI) to organize a 1-day interfaith dialogue workshop in Maiduguri, Borno State. At the workshop, all representatives of different faiths promised to promote gender equality and discourage discrimination against women.

Also, the Centre with support from MacArthur Foundation organized an Advanced Strategic Communication Training for 30 participants from various Anti-Corruption Agencies in Nigeria. The training which took place at the Legend Hotel, Ikeja Lagos was facilitated by the International Press Centre.

CDD is urging Nigerians to always verify the authenticity of stories before sharing them.

You can forward suspicious messages for verification via +2349062910568 or contact us on twitter @CDDWestAfrica

#StopFakeNews #StopDisinformation

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The Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) was established in the United Kingdom in 1997 as an independent, not-for-profit, research training, advocacy and capacity building organisation.