MODULE 2

Disinformation, misinformation, and hate speech
In this module…

• Why we shouldn’t use the term “fake news”.
• Definitions of disinformation, misinformation and malinformation.
• Human drivers behind misleading content.
• Hate speech and its impact on electoral processes.
• Electoral related violence and gender-based violence.
• Violence against journalists.
Definitions
« Fake news »

- To refer to false information presented as real news.
- When we consider that some information which is circulating on the media is misleading on purpose.
News ...

Have **values**

Are **verified**

Serve the society

**Empower** the public

Are driven by **trust**
‘Fake news’ is an OXYMORON – a self-contradicting group of words which undermines, sometimes even without realizing it, the credibility of verifiable information: the very essence of the concept of NEWS.
Crucial concepts

- **Disinformation**: Information that is false and deliberately created to harm a person, social group, organization or country.
- **Misinformation**: Information that is false but not created with the intention of causing harm.
- **Malinformation**: Information that is based on reality, used to inflict harm on a person, social group, organization, or country.
**Falseness**

- **Misinformation**
  - Unintentional mistakes such as inaccurate photo captions, dates, statistics, translations, or when satire is taken seriously.

**Intent to Harm**

- **Disinformation**
  - Fabricated or deliberately manipulated audio/visual content.
  - Intentionally created conspiracy theories or rumors.

- **Malinformation**
  - Deliberate publication of private information for personal or corporate rather than public interest, such as revenge porn.
  - Deliberate change of context, date or time of genuine content.
Artificial Intelligence, Big Data and Machine Learning…

- Can benefit democratic institutions by engaging voters and helping them be better informed.
- Great potential for enhancing independent journalism, campaigning, and supporting electoral processes in general.
- BUT the algorithms can easily spread disinformation, misinformation and malinformation, inflicting reputational damage to journalism, undermining the credibility of electoral processes and electoral regulators and undermining democracies worldwide.
Rumors and fabricated contents

- The affordability of social networking technologies, their scope and precision are real GAME CHANGERS on how disinformation, misinformation and malinformation can be transmitted.
- Citizens struggle to discern what is true and what is false.
- Extreme views, conspiracy theories, and populism flourish, and once-accepted truths and institutions are questioned.
- The spread of disinformation has become a critical challenge for elections and responses, measures and solutions are urgently needed.
Key elements
Other key actors of disinformation

- **Instigators**: actors who are at the origin of the creation and distribution of disinformation, and benefit from it, and who often pay for it to be operationalized.

- **Intermediaries**: vehicles for the content, such as social media platforms or applications,
Human drivers behind misleading content
• We want to be “liked”, be accepted, be part of the tribe or the group. We are humans and we are vulnerable.

• Emotive content, and content shared by a friend or family member, is more likely to be redistributed on social media than the content coming from an unknown source.

• “Trust networks” where the distribution of inaccurate, false and propagandistic content masquerading as news has found increased traction becoming “viral”.

• We also tend to have a tendency to be more attired by shockingly emotional content. Drama, scandal, tragedy, gossip apparently, are very attractive to humans too.
Drama is very popular
• **Clickbait**: marketing, advertising or information material that generates interest through these drivers and, thus, engagement, through a sensationalist headline that attracts clicks.

• **Echo-chambers**: situations in which beliefs are amplified or reinforced by communication and repetition inside a closed system and insulated from rebuttal.

• **Filter bubbles**: Artificial Intelligence-driven techniques to create ech-chambers, where users consume content that predominantly validates their views.
Coffee break
Hate Speech
The Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.

Working definition as:
"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."
Scapegoating, stereotyping, stigmatization and the use of derogatory language.

It is often employed in the promulgation of conspiracy theories, disinformation and denial and distortion of historical events such as genocide.
International Legal Framework and Policies

• Article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

1. Any propaganda for war shall be prohibited by law.

2. Any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law.

• The Rabat Plan of Action

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights organized several multi-stakeholder workshops that resulted in the Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of national, racial, or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility, or violence.

It also contains threshold tests and recommendations, which are extremely relevant to social media and many other aspects of the digital universe.
Electoral related violence
• Electoral related actors can trigger violence online and offline.

• Election-related conflict has devastating effects on governance and development.

• Root causes of conflict are economic, social and / or political issues in dispute and in the allocation of power, like challenging electoral results.
Four main characteristics of Electoral-related violence

- Is employed to achieve a POLITICAL OBJECTIVE
- Has BROAD RANGE OF MANIFESTATIONS like disruptions or delays in the polling process, coercive intimidation and threats of physical, psychological or sexual harm against voters, political supporters and polling officials.
- CAN OCCUR DURING ANY PHASE OF THE ELECTORAL CYCLE: from voter registration, political campaigning and polling day to the announcement of results and formation of government.
- Electoral violence is NOT gender-neutral.
Electoral-related Gender Based Violence (GBV)
Forms and impact of GBV

• GBV can virtually exclude women from the electoral processes.
• Attacks on personal dignity as a factor deterring women from entering politics, amplified by social media and AI.
• Online violence and abuse against women contribute to a hostile environment with the aim of shaming, intimidating or degrading women. Not all forms are crimes, but all impact the human rights of women.
• Psychological violence is way of control that includes systematic ridicule, ostracism, shame, sarcasm, criticism, disapproval, exclusion and discrimination.
• Threats and acts of physical and sexual violence or violence against relatives, friends and destruction of property or sensitive materials.
Violence against journalists
Journalism and Elections

• Journalism is key during electoral processes and all along the electoral cycle. It allows voters and citizens to make good choices and vote knowing what they are doing

• Attacks against those performing journalistic functions –including photographers and citizen journalists – have increased in the past decades, and impunity regarding these crimes prevails.
ATTACKS AND HARASSMENT AGAINST JOURNALISTS

Denial of Access
- Online threats
  - Censorship
  - Internet shutdowns
  - Technical attacks
    - Mass spamming
    - Flooding servers
    - Blocking
    - User or website

Invasion of Privacy
- Offline and/or online
  - Surveillance
  - Doxing
  - Stalking
  - Hacking

Direct Harassment and Attacks
- Offline and/or online
  - Harassment threats
  - Attacks, assault
  - Sexual harassment
  - Sexual assault
  - Kidnapping
  - Torture
  - Murder

Gender issues affect all forms of violence and attacks against journalists.
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<th>Establish</th>
<th>Develop</th>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Strengthen</th>
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<td>Establish general safety provisions for journalists, including but not</td>
<td>Develop accessible, real-time emergency response mechanisms for groups</td>
<td>Work together with EMBs and security forces in protocols for the protection and safety of journalists covering elections.</td>
<td>Strengthen provisions for the safety of journalists in conflict zones, for example by encouraging the</td>
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<td>limited to safety training courses during electoral processes;</td>
<td>and media organizations, including contacting and engaging available national and community resources;</td>
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<td>creation of so-called ‘media corridors’.</td>
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Recap Module 2
During this module we learned …

• Why we shouldn’t use the term “fake news”
• The definitions of disinformation, misinformation and malinformation
• The different key elements of this dynamics
• The human drivers behind misleading content
• Hate speech and its impact on electoral processes.
• The Rabat Plan of Action
• Electoral related violence and gender-based violence
• Violence against journalists
• The different strategies and techniques to spread disinformation and
• Who are the main targets of disinformation within the electoral cycle and how it can affect them.
• The relevance of the ELECTORAL CALENDAR and its connection with the ELECTORAL CYCLE
• Why ELECTORAL OPERATIONAL PLANNING is critical for electoral processes.
• The different ways of tackling disinformation, misinformation and malinformation as well as hate-speech
See you next week!