



ADISI - CAMEROON

# DÉSINFOX-AFRIQUE

## YAOUNDE INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON DISINFORMATION

# GENERAL REPORT



13-14 june 2022

**MASTER CLASS** 280 PARTICIPANTS



Institut Français  
Yaoundé

**ROUND TABLES** 450 Participants



# DesinfoxAfrique

**Participants FIYAD** A total of 730

# 00 SUMMARY

01. INTRODUCTION

02. REMINDER OF THE OBJECTIVES OF FIYAD

03. BACKGROUND

04. OVERVIEW OF THE FORUM

05. FINDINGS

06. RECOMMENDATIONS

07. CONCLUSION

■ ANNEXES

# 01 INTRODUCTION

Within the framework of the Désinfox Afrique project initiated by CFI (French media development agency) and supported by the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, ADISI-Cameroon in partnership with the French Institute and Media & Democracy hosted the Yaoundé International Forum on Disinformation from 13 to 14 June 2022. In order to respond to the challenges of growing disinformation, adopted a participatory approach by involving all actors in the information chain that can be mobilised to fight this growing phenomenon. Forming a real media ecosystem, a total of 730 people took part in the various discussions and reflections of the forum, around the central theme: “Access to information and freedom of expression in the face of disinformation” and more than 15,000 people were reached through the Facebook live.

**Yaounde international forum on Disinformation adopted a participatory approach by involving all actors in the information chain that can be mobilised to fight this growing phenomenon**

Actors of all types (media, bloggers, civil society organisations, media experts, regulatory authorities and state institutions), coming from several countries (Côte d’Ivoire, Central African Republic, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Mali, Senegal, Chad, France), the objective was to allow them to feed the debates with their experience and bring innovative solutions ready to be implemented.

At the launch of the agenda, the opening panel of Yaounde international forum on Désinformation set the tone of the event with a discussion on “How to create a healthy ecosystem of professional and independent media that allows journalists to exercise their profession in an ethical manner with the support of regulators and public authorities? The exchange sessions took place around several themes, some of which were for round tables: “Is there a need for a law against false information? What is the situation today, what are the institutional perspectives?”; “Fake news in the air of Covid-19 (infodemia): events, local initiatives and perspectives”; “What

contribution of civil society in the fight against disinformation?

The master classes, conceived as more technical exchange sessions between information professionals, focused on themes such as “The role of fact-checking in the fight against disinformation; the principles of the IFCN and the labelling process; does fact-checking engage in an asymmetrical battle with false information”; “Disinformation and false information, an obstacle to access to quality information? What strategies can regulatory authorities develop to support the media’s fight against misinformation”; “How to go beyond fact-checking (media education, involvement of civil society and authorities, etc.)? And how can journalists support these initiatives? Among others. Workshops were also held on the following themes: “General awareness of the phenomenon of false information (typology and characteristics) & How to build an infox”; “The right reflexes to have: detection of false information on social networks, identification of trolls, identification of partisan accounts, detection of a suspicious image, etc.”

***This Forum made it possible to explore the phenomenon of disinformation from all possible angles, and to shed light on aspects that had remained obscure until then from the point of view of certain laymen in the field***

This Forum made it possible to explore the phenomenon of disinformation from all possible angles, and to shed light on aspects that had remained obscure until then from the point of view of certain laymen in the field. A set of findings leading to a number of recommendations was then drawn up. These recommendations are intended to be implemented rapidly, in order to effectively counteract the rise of misinformation.

## 02

## REMINDER OF THE OBJECTIVES

**Main objective of the Forum:**

- To build national and international synergy around the fight against the proliferation of fake news in Cameroon.

**Specific objectives**

- Raise awareness among media and information sector actors (information producers, regulators, bloggers, civil society representatives working on issues of rights and digital democracy) on the issues and dangers of the proliferation of fake news;
  - To strengthen the capacities of the actors present to fight against disinformation through awareness raising, the discovery of techniques for detecting fake news and of existing open source processing tools and techniques for disseminating verified information, and exchanges between fellow verification journalists;
  - Engage media actors and their environment in a concerted and cooperative approach to fight against infox, and result in the proceedings of the forum describing the situation in Cameroon with regard to disinformation and the ways to reduce this phenomenon.

# 03 BACKGROUND

Journalists have always made mistakes by publishing false or partially false data. Lack of time or vigilance, overconfidence in their sources or their own knowledge, confusion between their beliefs and the facts, or the reproduction of press releases without verifying their factual content have favoured these errors. Some media outlets have also long exploited, for audience or commercial reasons, the taste for “sensationalism” of a part of the public by running stories based largely on truncated facts.

However, the complexity and scale of information pollution in our digitally connected world poses unprecedented challenges. The dissemination of false or truncated information, once restricted to media channels, is now finding new scope with the penetration of the internet and the increasing use of social networks by people. The virtual monopoly of information supply held by the media has ended with the arrival of the Internet. Search engines aggregate and make accessible in a few seconds thousands of sources on the same subject, while social media platforms give everyone the possibility to be a disseminator

and producer of information. The Internet, through the profusion of knowledge that is put online and the abundance of testimonies that anyone can disseminate, acts as a powerful lever for democratisation, but also, and for the same reasons, as a formidable channel for disinformation.

*In Africa, as in the rest of the world, these interactions contribute to infusing a culture of accountability within the political class and public institutions, but they also carry their share of approximate, erroneous or misleading information*

In Africa, as in the rest of the world, these interactions contribute to infusing a culture of accountability within the political class and public institutions, but they also carry their share of approximate, erroneous or misleading information. For example, nearly 70% of the false information relating to Covid 19 listed by the Network of Online Press Professionals of Côte d’Ivoire (REPPRELICI) between May and July 2020 was disseminated on social networks, compared to just under 30%

in the media.

False information relayed on social networks is practised in all its forms throughout the world, and neither Cameroon nor the Central African Republic is immune: lies, slander, false attributions of quotes, entirely fabricated articles, photos retouched or taken out of context, the use of increasingly sophisticated techniques such as trolling or deepfake, sensationalist sharing chains on WhatsApp or even fake Facebook accounts or fake online publications cloning the visual codes of existing media to better fool the public. The perpetrators of these false reports are also much more diverse than before: individuals acting for themselves or in the name of their convictions, partisan interest groups, journalists pursuing various goals... and even sometimes anonymous individuals or groups acting under the cover of false identities on social networks.

*The extent of the proliferation of fake news is now seen as a major factor of social and political disorder in a growing number of countries, and the massive circulation of fake news on the Internet poses threats to the democratic processes of which freedom of expression and access to information are pillars.*

With little awareness of how to track down fake news and under pressure from online publishing and the race for ratings, the existing media often relay fake news themselves by reprinting content from dubious sources whose reliability is only assessed after the fact.

At the same time, the precarious economic situation in which many media find themselves, including in Cameroon and the Central African Republic, makes them more vulnerable to political and financial pressure from public authorities or partisan interest groups. Many media cannot afford to verify certain information and seek to improve the quality of their productions. This situation makes them more prone to sensationalism or the repetition of articles from interest groups, all of which encourages the proliferation of false information.

The extent of the proliferation of fake news is now seen as a major factor of social and political disorder in a growing number of countries, and the massive circulation of fake news on the Internet poses threats to the democratic processes of which freedom of expression and access to information are pillars. The foundations of democracy are indeed at stake when these same freedoms are used to disseminate untruths that lead to the spread of a pernicious scepticism

that pollutes public debate, undermines social cohesion and weakens checks and balances. In the African context, misinformation can also contribute to fuelling inter-community tensions and trigger cycles of violence.

In Cameroon in particular, according to an internal study by the French-speaking African office of Facebook Inc (Metaverse) commissioned from ADISI-Cameroon at the end of 2020, it appears that two major contexts crystallise the proliferation of disinformation and misinformation with sometimes corollaries such as hate speech: the context of the Anglophone crisis, which reached its violent phase in December 2016, and what is known in Cameroon as the post-electoral crisis of 2018, with new concepts such as ‘Sardinards’ (term designating supporters of President Biya) and ‘Tontinards’ (term designating supporters of Maurice Kamto, the candidate who came second in the elections). The study also notes that each context corresponds to a particular type of fake news, which in some cases takes the form of political or economic news, and in most cases has a tribalist flavour. This observation is corroborated by an investigation by Young Africa, which indicated in March 2020 that political factions active on social networks, including Facebook, are engaged in a merciless struggle generating hate speech, which in turn encourages attacks of a tribalist nature, or based on gender, religion and other distinctions. In most cases, the survey notes, the resurgence of fake news is experiencing unprecedented virality, sometimes spilling over into the mainstream media whose main indicator is the Sunday debates. In this context, where there is no law on access to information and where the main reference points for citizens are the media and social networks, the reliability and factuality of information sometimes take on propagandistic and manipulative forms.

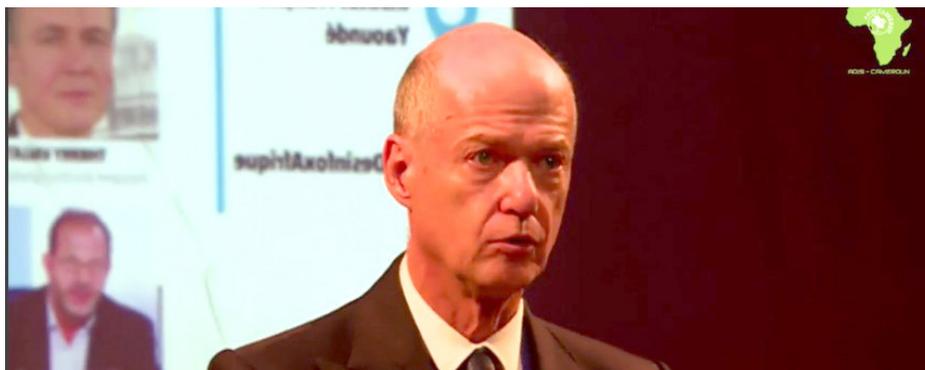
Countering the proliferation of false information is therefore today both a challenge to better guarantee freedom of the press and expression, to improve the healthiness of public debate and to encourage the democratic processes at work.

Some governments have adopted severe measures to this end, which increasingly include restrictions on access to communication tools or the adoption of digital codes that provide for the restriction of certain freedoms. This inclination, which is dangerous for the development of democracy, makes it all the more

necessary for media actors to acquire the tools and techniques of fact checking. It also seems necessary to work more generally on the advent of a fact-checking ecosystem, which would involve a growing number of media applying the ethics and method of fact-checking, and becoming increasingly detached from a race for sensationalism and the repetition of dubious content. This environment also needs to be supported by the guarantor institutions of public authorities and especially media regulators.

In this way, a healthy ecosystem of professional and independent media, allowing their journalists to carry out their work with rigour and ethics, verifying information according to recognised rules and using effective tools, while benefiting from the support of the regulator and public authorities, can contribute to the reduction of tensions and the reinforcement of national cohesion through the dissemination of reliable information and the creation of pluralist and peaceful spaces of dialogue.

The fight against the spread of false news cannot do without the involvement of all producers and distributors of information. It is even increasingly recognised that this fight must also include the “consumers” of information, which, according to the UNESCO definition, is a public good. New synergies must emerge in order to fight false information more effectively, through improvetraining of journalists to fight against it, through the strengthening of cooperation between actors in the media sector and through the development of critical education actions for online publication.



**Christophe GUILHOU,**  
French Ambassador in Cameroon

[...] By bringing together journalists, regulators and civil society, we can take stock of the situation and devise response strategies [...].



●● LIVE. Désinfox-Afrique.  
#StopFakeNews

il y a 3 semaines · 15,1 K vues



Marthe Mounyol, Aurelie Buchom et 7

Capture of Facebook Live



**Thierry Vallat,**  
President and CEO of CFI

*"misinformation is becoming a real cancer, hence the importance of this forum"*

# 04 OVERVIEW OF THE FORUM



Inaugural round table

Under the moderation of **DIARA NDIAYE**, journalist at RFI, the speakers **CHRISTOPHE GUILHOU**, French Ambassador to Cameroon, the President and General Manager of CFI, **THIERRY VALLAT**, the Executive Director of Media and Democracy, **OLIVIER PIOT** and the Executive Secretary of ADISI-CAMEROUN, **PAUL-JOËL KAMTCHANG**, took the floor to inaugurate the FIYAD. To the central question raised by the Ambassador on this occasion *“How to create a healthy ecosystem of professional and independent media allowing journalists to exercise their profession in all deontology with the support of regulators and public authorities”* was answered by a poignant quote from the Executive Director of Media and Democracy *“There is no media without democracy and there is no democracy without independent media. The words of the late Jean Saint-Clair Maka, CFI’s trainer in the Central African Republic, who died on 23 February 2022, further supported these words: “There is no independent media without trained and protected journalists”*. They all recalled two fundamental elements, the first of which is that journalists and public authorities are not in conflict when each seeks to contribute to the general interest and the defence of democracy. The second is negative: the challenges currently facing the media ecosystem, particularly that of misinformation, also apply to public authorities. It is therefore only by working together that lasting solutions can be found, solutions

that are developed collectively, which was the aim of FIYAD.

This was followed by the inaugural round table. It brought together the Counsellor for Cooperation and Cultural Action (French Embassy in Cameroon), **YANN LORVO**, the Vice-President of the High Council for Communication of the Central African Republic, **ISABELLE VACKAT**, the President of Eduk-media, **BLAISE PASCAL ANDZONGO**, the French Ambassador to Cameroon and the Executive Director of Media and Democracy. It resulted in an inventory of disinformation in Cameroon and the Central African Republic and recommendations to give journalists a taste for rigour in a context where information circulates more rapidly; to sensitise mainly the youngest in the media because they are not yet seasoned and are the most vulnerable; to sensitise citizens so that they have the ability to detect false information and curb disinformation at their level; to involve more the gender aspect in the fight against disinformation. A number of recommendations for action were drawn up, with the participation of some members of the public who were able to exchange views with the panellists.



**Diara NDIAYE**, Journalist, RFI and France 24

## 1<sup>st</sup> round table

The first round table was then structured around this double question: *“Is a law against false information necessary? What is the situation today, what are the institutional perspectives?”* The aim was precisely to go beyond these questions and to address other solutions than the legal way to counter misinformation, and in particular ways of strengthening the dialogue between regulatory authorities and journalists, ways of media education, etc. Moderated by **Simone Toussi**, head of the Cameroon office at the Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA), this roundtable brought together three representatives of

Cameroonian and Central African media regulatory authorities: **LOUIS CHRISTIAN OWONO**, representative of the Telecommunications Regulatory Agency (ART), **ISABELLE VACKAT**, vice-president of the High Council of Communication of the Central African Republic (CAR); and **MR. ALAIN DENIS MBEZELE**, representative of the National Council of Communication (CNC).

The scene was set from the outset by Simone Toussi, who recalled that in Cameroon *“there is still no law specifically regulating disinformation or misinformation, these forms of communication whose objective is most often to cause trouble and disrupt the social balance [...] There is also no text that highlights the difference between disinformation and misinformation. She also recalled that the phenomenon of misinformation was maintained by various actors, and that journalists were sometimes unfortunately part of it.*

First of all, the need for transparent collaboration was recalled: *“The reflections aimed at fighting disinformation, developed within the framework of the Forum, must not be attacked by the courts”*, said **ISABELLE VACKAT**. This reflection was salutary in order to anticipate the risk that certain FIYAD proposals would not be defeated as soon as they were published, and the fact that the representatives of the authorities present spoke in front of journalists, bloggers and civil society organisations testified to this desire to advance towards a consensus.

The speakers hammered home two main aspects that they felt concerned the flow of information. One was the identification of subscribers, so that we know what information has been leaked? By whom? And on the other hand, media education (a formative approach that aims to teach citizens to *“be active spectators, autonomous explorers and actors in media communication”*), which involves raising consumers’ awareness and protecting information producers.

The other approach put forward was media education, which is defined as an educational project aiming at individual fulfilment, the evolution of social relations, social criticism and the emancipation of groups and communities. It proceeds to the sensitisation of information consumers and the protection of information producers on the other hand. Above all, it was specified that it is important to involve the gender aspect (co-construction of programmes, or ensuring parity in the beneficiaries of this awareness-raising, or educating by raising awareness on inequalities that may exist in the treatment of certain subjects concerning women) in order to co-construct the tools for combating disinformation; because this aspect is too often relegated to the *“background”*, to use Isabelle Vackat’s words, in the process of combating disinformation.



## Round table

### 2<sup>nd</sup> ROUND TABLE

Open to the public, the reflections here focused on *“Fake news in the air of Covid-19 (infodemia): manifestations, local initiatives and perspectives”*.

Moderated by **VALDEZ ONANINA**, journalist and trainer at Africa Check, it brought together **DR HEMES NKWA**, a doctor and health blogger and epidemiologist (Ministry of Public Health), **MARIE VARLOTEAUX**, technical expert for the National Agency for Research on AIDS and Viral Hepatitis (ANRS) and Expertise France in Yaoundé, and **DESMOND NGALA**, Country Manager of the Defyhatenow project in Cameroon.

Starting from the principle that *“where there is no good information, disinformation and misinformation make their nest”* according to **DR. HEMES NKWA**, the first exchanges between the audience and the experts focused on the evolution of the Covid19 pandemic and the content of the information that has been circulating around this disease since its appearance, notably the fact that traditional medicine via traditional plants would treat Covid19 etc.

Faced with this phenomenon, a first response consists of raising awareness and revisiting the preconceived ideas and false information that are being

propagated. Faced with this phenomenon, a first response is once again to raise people’s awareness and to revise the preconceived ideas and false information that are being spread. It was noted that a series of anthropological surveys had been carried out in the Cameroonian context in response to these challenges, following the example of the work of **Professor EDONGO NTEDE PIERRE FRANÇOIS**. It had

sought to bring the populations to understand what Covid-19 actually is, to deconstruct the ideas and stereotypes built around it and to accept the vaccine.



Round table



View of the public

However, the experts noted that the fight against misinformation regarding Covid-19 and other pandemics such as cholera and HIV/AIDS, among others, remains a perpetual struggle that must be carried out at all levels and involve various actors, notably health care workers, the media, citizens (through the responsible use of information and communication networks and platforms; Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in a global way), public authorities/government (they must constantly review the strategies implemented to fight against, encourage those that work and improve those that do not work or at least outlaw them).

### 3<sup>rd</sup> ROUND TABLE

**The third-round table was on the theme:** *“What contribution can civil society make to the fight against disinformation?”* Several speakers took part in this round table, including a good number of representatives of Cameroonian civil society, under the moderation of **YANN LORVO**, Counsellor for Cooperation and Cultural Action at the French Embassy: **RIGOBERT KENMONNE** Executive Secretary of Accès Digital Cameroun, **BLAISE PASCAL ANDZONGO**, President of Eduk-Media, **AVIS MOMENI**, Secretary General of Protège-Qv, **DANIA EBONGUE** President of the Cameroon Bloggers Association, **ASMAOU KARIM**, Vice President of The Okweliens, **JONAS RAZANADRAKOTO**, Project Manager at the Pharos Observatory.

*“Educate the youth, endow them with values and cultivate in them a critical spirit for a responsible use of ICTs”*, this maxim articulated by Blaise Pascal Andzongo was the main thread of this exchange. This recommendation is very relevant in view of the fact that young people are the social stratum most present on social networks and communication platforms. Unfortunately, they are also the ones most involved in the phenomenon of disinformation, due to their lack of education in the responsible use of digital tools, which makes them particularly vulnerable. This being the case, it is all the more necessary to involve media education modules in the pedagogical process; so that children can already integrate and develop critical thinking in the use of media from both school and home.

However, it was noted by the panellists that the emphasis must be placed on the consideration of human rights by the public authorities in the drafting of laws relating to access to information. Thus, raising this aspect made sense in view of the fact that personal data recorded during the registration process in platforms and networks are very often used by ill-intentioned people to cause harm to individuals online. The absolute guarantee of protection of information directly related to privacy could therefore strengthen the trust of users/internet users and best contribute to the fight against disinformation.



Round table

## 4<sup>th</sup> ROUND TABLE

Moderated by **PAUL-JOËL KAMTCHANG** Executive Secretary ADISI-Cameroon. This round table dealt with *“the dangers of disinformation on intercommunity relations (living together); What are the findings? What perspectives of the actors?”*

**CATHERINE BOSSARD**, Director of the Pharos Observatory. **ARSÈNE JONATHAN MOSSEAVO**, journalist, trainer and junior observer with the Pharos Observatory,



Round table

**DA OUDOU MOUNCHILI**, junior observer with the Pharos Observatory. **DONATIEN KOFFI**, teacher and trainer in journalism, are the speakers who took part to edify

the public on the theme brought to their reflection.

They noted that the phenomenon of disinformation is becoming more pronounced in a crisis context through the proliferation of hate speech, the consequences of which include the legitimisation of violence (in Côte d'Ivoire), the birth of conspiracy theories (in France), and the ethnicisation and instrumentalisation of culture (in Central Africa). They also noted that these discourses and theories were once again particularly prevalent on social networks and communication platforms.

This exchange revealed a heavy responsibility on the part of communication platforms and social networks to regulate the content that circulates on them.

In the end, the Fact-checkers have the heavy task of permanently and intensively verifying the content/information circulating online on a daily basis, in order to effectively combat the phenomenon of disinformation.

## 5<sup>th</sup> ROUND TABLE

Moderated by **MATHIEU SETTE**, Cooperation Officer at the French Embassy in Cameroon, it brought together **RIGOBERT KENMONNE**, Executive Secretary of Accès Digital Cameroun, **BLAISE PASCAL ANDZONGO**, President of Eduk-Media,



**Round table**

**AVIS MOMENI**, Secretary General of Protège-Qv, **MARTHE NDIANG**, journalist and head of the fact-checking section at DataCameroon, and **MICHÈLE ABE**, President of the Fondation conseil jeune. This panel reflected on national synergies that can be implemented to fight against disinformation in Cameroon?

*“The actors of the chain must form a strong enough block to lead a real fight against fake news/disinformation”,* this formula has given orientations and has further furnished the panel with a lot of ideas.

reflections of the stakeholders. In the chain of actors, the public authorities/ State, which constitute the strong link, must constantly coordinate and direct the actions of the other actors, who are notably the producers and consumers of information.

However, a strong appeal was made by the speakers to the leaders to get them to socialise with the digital thing, in order to proceed with the elaboration of a law of access to information. It emerged that although false information has very *“long legs”*, and the tools for fighting against it, particularly fact-checking, have *“short legs”*, it is thanks to the combined efforts of the actors through a strong synergy that a real weapon will be created to eradicate the phenomenon of disinformation.



View of the public at the opening ceremony of the forum

The preceding paragraphs summarise the reflections that took place during the round tables on the central theme of *“Access to information and freedom of expression in the face of disinformation”*. In the following paragraphs, the specific issues of fact-checking journalism that were addressed in the master classes are not dealt with.

# MASTERS CLASS

## 1<sup>st</sup> MASTER CLASS

Focused on the role of fact-checking in the fight against disinformation and the principles of the International Fact-checking Network. Laurent bigot, Director of the Public School of Journalism in Tours and IFCN assessor, introduced the class by stating that the IFCN was founded in September 2015 in Florida. According to him, there are now more or less 341 newsrooms around the world that do fact-checking. He went on to talk about the 31 criteria<sup>1</sup> for certification to the IFCN that signatory organisations must meet. These criteria are themselves grouped into 05 main principles so it is important to summarise them in this report:

**Principle 1:** A commitment to fairness and equity. This involves signatory organisations verifying allegations using the same standard for each fact-check; not focusing their fact-checking on one side only; following the same process for each fact-check and letting the evidence dictate the conclusions; not advocating or taking political positions on the issues they verify.

**Principle 2:** A commitment to standards and transparency of source. This means that signatories must provide all sources in sufficient detail for readers to be able to reproduce their work, except in cases where the personal safety of a source might be compromised.

**Principle 3:** A commitment to transparency of funding and organisation. This principle consists of transparency of the sources of funding for the signatory organisations; ensuring that funders have no influence on the conclusions reached by the fact checkers in their reports, if they accept funding from other organisations; detailing the professional background of all key figures in the organisation and explaining the organisational structure and legal status.

**Principle 4:** A commitment to transparency of methodology. This means that signatory organisations explain the methodology they use to select, research, write, edit, publish and proofread their fact-checks; encourage readers to send in fact-checking requests; and are transparent about why and how they fact-check.

**Principle 5:** A commitment to an open and honest correction policy. This ultimately involves signatories publishing their correction policy and following it scrupulously; correcting clearly and transparently in accordance with the correction policy, seeking wherever possible to ensure that readers see the corrected version.

Moreover, the IFCN was created with the primary aim of bringing together

fact-checkers from around the world, especially those who are isolated in their own countries and even in their own newsrooms. Speaking of objectives, the IFCN aims among other things to promote a number of descriptive articles and research on fact-checking, the IFCN also aims to work on a code for the promotion of standards and good practice in fact-checking.

This master class ended with a series of exchanges of experience between the participants: Africa Check, which is working on the full integration of data journalism into fact-checking; DataCameroon, which is working on linking data visualisations into fact-checking texts, etc.

<sup>1</sup> [www.ifcncodeofprinciples.poynter.org](http://www.ifcncodeofprinciples.poynter.org); the commitments of the code of principles



Master class

## 2<sup>nd</sup> MASTER CLASS

**Focusing on the theme:** Disinformation and false information, a barrier to access to quality information? What strategies can regulatory authorities develop to support the media's fight against disinformation?

This master class was attended by experts in charge of communication regulation, namely **MR OWONO LOUIS CHRISTIAN**, representative of the Telecommunications Regulatory Agency (ART); **MS ISABELLE VACKAT**, vice-president of the Central African Republic's High Council for Communication; and **MR ALAIN DENIS MBEZELE**, representative of the National Council for Communication (CNC). In the end, the beneficiaries were reminded that they are not alone in the fight against fake news and that it is more a question of the actors of the information network pooling their efforts in the process. In the end, the beneficiaries of the "Disinfox Africa" programme were reminded that they are not alone in the fight against fake news and that it is more a question of the actors of the information network pooling their efforts in the process. This implies both for the participants of the Forum in particular and the beneficiaries of the programme in general to promote and even perpetuate good practices that aim at reducing misinformation in the near and far environment. It should be noted that it is all these combined efforts that will contribute to an environment for the lesser saint, which so far is highly threatened by the mischief of the phenomenon of disinformation.

This exchange framework was furnished with the following recommendation: Raise public awareness of the responsible use of digital tools and especially social networks.



Master class

## 3<sup>rd</sup> MASTER CLASS

Moderated by **ERIC LE BRAZ** in a panel consisting of **LAURENT BIGOT, OLIVIER PIOT, BLAISE PASCAL ANDZANGO, ASSANE DIAGNE**; participants were enlightened on the theme: *How to go beyond fact-checking? How can journalists support these initiatives?*

According to **LAURENT BIGOT**, false

information speaks to fears, prejudices, beliefs and in a global way to emotions. Fact-checking, on the other hand, tries to bring reason back into play.

To this end, he says that the answers that can help stop this scourge are at various levels.

Firstly, *“opening up to others”*: through training (contacting experts, creating synergies with those who have mastered fact-checking and can teach it to others); forming partnerships with bloggers’ associations, with social media platforms (Facebook, etc.), by exchanging quality studies.

Secondly, *“involve citizens in the editorial board of the media”*: ask citizens to report facts about which they have doubts so that the editorial board can verify the veracity or otherwise of these facts.

Tercio *“training civil society organisations” and “setting up editorial offices in journalism schools to encourage leaders to integrate fact-checking programmes into the curricula”*; *“including artists (musicians, comedians) in the process”*, *“create fact-checking ambassadors to advocate and relay productions on their different platforms”*; *“advocate media and information literacy by making each internet user a fact-checker (do not share information if you are not sure of the source)”*; *“institutions (local authorities, embassies. Institutions (local authorities, embassies, etc.) must accompany the work of media education, especially among the youngest who are the most vulnerable”*.

In the end, it was discussed to encourage investigative journalism, it is all the more important to go and look for information by oneself, sometimes taking risks to get the right information; because even journalists convey false news at the request of some people to make money, *“the real information is nowhere to be found”*.

## 4<sup>th</sup> MASTER CLASS

Moderated by **VALDEZ ONANINA**, this one was introduced by the words of **DIARA NDIAYE**, a journalist who shared her experience by saying that she has a programme entitled “*So what do we say?*” Dedicated to young people, it deals with fact-checking, and she explained that the programme is broadcast in the Fulfulde language in order to reach all targets and raise awareness. Olivier Ribouis joins the thread by telling us about his experience (before the arrival of the Desinfox Afrique project, there was no initiative to strengthen the capacities of journalists in fact-checking in Benin); for him, the particularity of fact-checking in Benin is that it is done in French, but in local languages. He explains, for example, that during the preparation of the 2020 elections, they had to recruit 84 media to support them in this method of dissemination. Olivier Ribouis notes in passing the difficulty for the media to make a permanent commitment because some commit to a project and then get bored after a while.



Master class

Based on the observation that very few people take the time to read fact-checking content, the idea was put forward to adapt by opting for short videos and very catchy titles. **CHRISTELLE BOURDEAU**, a fact-checking expert, pointed out the difference between fast-checking and fact-checking, noting that the former takes less time than the latter. It’s more about raising awareness of the impact of false information. **ERIC LE BRAZ** in his speech insisted more on the readable quality of fact checking, new formats of fast checking, among others.

Some tips to implement to detect fake news (proposed in this master class):

- **Targeting Whatsapp/telegram groups that post a lot;**
- **Targeting Facebook pages where there are highly commented topics.**



View of the public at the closing ceremony of the forum

In view of what has just been said, it should be noted that many solutions were proposed by the speakers to the problems addressed in the master classes. Let's come to the training workshops where a series of modules were developed with the objective of raising awareness among students in Yaoundé schools, who are not necessarily trained in fact-checking, and to share with them knowledge on fact-checking tools and techniques.

## TRAINING WORKSHOPS

These workshops provided a framework in which many actors (students, journalists, representatives of the authorities (gendarmes)) were equipped with some techniques for detecting false news, to sharpen their critical sense and to lead them to verify information themselves. All this was done with a view to contributing in a practical and effective way to the fight against disinformation.

### 1<sup>st</sup> TRAINING WORKSHOP

During the first workshop, whose objective was to discover the principle of fact-checking, the trainers, like **DONATIEN KOFFI**, a teacher and trainer in journalism, and **AMÉLIE GUÉ**, a journalist and trainer, informed the participants on various themes, notably general awareness of the infox phenomenon (typology and characteristics) and how an infox is constructed; How an infox spreads: how social networks and online media work (virality, bubble filters, echo chambers, algorithms, clikbait...);

The right reflexes to have: detection of infoxes on social networks, identification of trolls, identification of partisan accounts, detection of a suspicious image, etc.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> TRAINING WORKSHOP

In the second workshop on the discovery of fact-checking tools, stage 2, the participants were led to discover, through **DONATIEN KOFFI** and **ARSÈNE JONATHAN MOSSEAVO**, some of the fundamentals of fact-checking and some of the primary detection tools; source verification and the basics of fact-checking; the ethics of the verifier and a practical exercise to learn good practices in fact-checking.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> TRAINING WORKSHOP

The third workshop was devoted to training participants in fact-checking by Ange Kasongo, journalist and trainer **FOTSO FONKAM**, trainer and blogger; **AMÉLIE GUÉ**, journalist and trainer on *“Story-telling fact-checking: is fact-checking different from what we learn at school?”*; *“Using social networks to look for infoxes and to publish on them: are social networks the journalist’s enemy or friend?”*; *“Success/not success/reactions of trainers and beneficiaries?”*

At the end of these workshops, the participants, having acquired the weapons to confront fake news/disinformation, now constitute a strong link in the chain whose main objective is to block the road to this scourge which is a real threat in society today.



It was a question of proposing a forum that was as complete as possible on an intellectual and multi-actor level of the information chain. The diversity of the audiences who attended the various round tables, master classes and training workshops showed the reality and above all the impact that the phenomenon of disinformation and all its corollaries has on both online and offline activities.

# 05 FINDINGS

- Freedom of the press and the right of access to information are real levers in the fight against disinformation ;
  - The protection of producers and consumers of information contributes to the production and consumption of good content;
  - Impunity for fake news actors contributes to the spread of fake news on social networks and information platforms;
  - The controversies surrounding Covid19 and its vaccine are important factors in the proliferation of fake news online and offline;
    - The social perceptions of Covid19, the collection and management of information on Covid19 are vectors of disinformation both in the Cameroonian context and worldwide;
  - Increase in disinformation, with new techniques of manipulation and editing of erroneous content emerging every day;
  - Which populations in particular are involved in the dissemination of false information?
    - Journalists: what mechanisms make many journalists participate in this disinformation?
    - CSOs: the phenomenon of misinformation is well known to CSOs who are already fighting against this phenomenon as well as against hate speech;
    - The regulatory authorities have a role to play in supporting national synergies in the fight against disinformation.

## 06

## RECOMMENDATIONS

## TO THE MEDIA

- Give journalists a taste for rigour in a context where information circulates more rapidly. Journalists should respect ethics, always compare sources after gathering information, and avoid running towards the buzz and the scoop;
  - Multiply the sharing of experiences following the example of forums, regional seminars, exchange programmes etc. in order to equip journalists and teach them or reinforce fact-checking techniques;
    - Raise awareness (through audio-visual programmes) mainly among the youngest in the media as they are not yet seasoned and are the most vulnerable.
    - Raising awareness of citizens to have the capacity to detect false information and curb misinformation at their level ;
      - To denounce or file a complaint when one has been the subject of an infox especially for defamation, invasion of privacy, harassment etc. In order to help the competent bodies to judge the extent of the injustice and to impose a sanction;
      - Emphasise media literacy; as it is more important to make students aware of the increasing presence of media in all its forms and to inform them of past historical events which are very often at the origin of its abuses. This can be done through audio-visual programmes or even the organisation of school visits;
        - Multiply the debates of co-construction of tools and systems to fight against Fake news and Disinformation;
          - Raise consumers' awareness of responsible ICT use;
          - Involve bloggers in the process of fighting Disinformation;
          - Educate other media, especially with the support of actors such as the government and civil society actors, in order to bring about real interaction and even inclusion with regard to disinformation;
          - Educate consumers on the responsible use of communication and information platforms and networks. This can be done through short television programmes and forums created on platforms whose contents could be educational tools, role-playing games and videos, discussions and exchanges on the themes of media use, leading to the creation of a tip sheet for being serene on the web;
            - Involve community media in the fight against Disinformation by equipping them with tools and techniques for monitoring and fact-checking. This includes

journalistic methodology, fact-checking techniques, fact-checking software, use of websites, use of databases, OSINT (Open-Source Intelligence) training, Rumour and Fake News Watch Techniques among others;

- Create a real synergy between actors fighting against disinformation and actors fighting against hate speech.

## TO REGULATOR BODIES

- Build a real synergy between all actors (media, civil society organisations, public authorities) for a real fight against Disinformation;
  - Develop a law on access to information;
  - Arm communication actors with the principle of responsibility in the treatment of information;
    - To take into account the protection of privacy in the development of access to information and Disinformation laws;
    - Work to resolve the issue of slow communication and information management that prevails at the government level;
    - Create a bridge between health professionals and fact-checkers;
    - Create a bridge between the Ministry of Communication and bloggers;
    - Adopt a law on confidence in the digital economy (LCEN);
    - Adopt a law on the protection of personal data;
    - Renfortify the law on the protection of personal data;
    - Strengthen the capacity of the various stakeholders in terms of techniques and tools to fight against Disinformation;
      - Educate consumers on digital citizenship, responsible media use and regulations;
      - Create a National Council for Media and Information Education (CNEMI);
      - Accompany public and private actors, NGOs, civil society, media, etc. in the fight against the phenomenon of the spread of false information in the digital age;
        - Establish mandatory cooperation of digital platforms for an effective fight against false information in Cameroon;
        - Strengthen and promote the harmonisation of the fields of competence between these institutions, with a view to strengthening their collaboration.

## TO CIVIL SOCIETY

- Emphasise media education through initiatives such as those implemented by the Cameroonian Association EDUK-MEDIA, which aims to develop a critical mindset towards media consumption and production;

- Train and accompany regulators in fact-checking techniques and the detection of fake news and hate speech in the framework of programmes such as those deployed by ADISI-Cameroon;
- Multiply the debates of co-construction of tools and systems to fight against Fake news and Disinformation.

# 07 CONCLUSION

The Yaounde International Forum on Disinformation was a real moment of exchange and co-construction of these acts, around the objective of building a national and international synergy around the fight against the proliferation of fake news in Cameroon. During these two days, the participants were not only engaged in round tables and master classes, but also through workshops where they familiarised themselves for some and for others to the tool of the fight against disinformation which is mainly fact-checking.

Beyond the tools of fact-checking, the synergy between all actors (media, civil society organisations, public authorities) was constantly highlighted as a real weapon in the process of fighting disinformation.

It should be noted that this activity saw the participation of more than 700 people in person, without forgetting the live-streaming of the inaugural plenary, which also made it possible to reach the greatest number of people, giving us another reason to be extremely proud of the results of the Forum. Given the scourge of our times and the need to take quite serious measures to limit the impact of Disinformation activities on our environment, special efforts were made to adopt sustainable behaviours.

However, it is undoubtedly important to note that by building on the good practices advocated within the framework of this Yaounde International Forum on Disinformation and by taking practical and pragmatic actions, sustainable solutions can be found to limit or even eradicate the phenomenon of Disinformation.

It should be noted that this forum, as a new event, brought together actors who, in the course of their exchanges, went beyond the theme of disinformation and touched on aspects such as digital citizenship, the digital economy etc. Therefore, this kind of initiative should be encouraged and reproduced in order to continue the consultation process. In the same vein, despite the magnitude of the task, we must also hope that all the forces present during this forum will perpetuate the good initiatives mentioned in this context.

Finally, it must always be borne in mind that the fight against misinformation is part of the wider effort to preserve a healthy public debate.

# ANNEXES

## MEDIA COVERAGE

- Radio stations invited 3 present ;
- 9 invited print media 8 present ;
- 02 Websites invited 01 present ;
- 04 bloggers noted 4 present ;
- Out of 25 invited media 17 were present ;
- As for the experts, 14 experts out of 18 invited responded ;
- 8 beneficiaries out of 9 expected from Cameroon ;
- 13 beneficiaries out of 14 expected from the Central African Republic.



ADISI - CAMEROON

# DÉSINFOX-AFRIQUE

## YAOUNDE INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON DISINFORMATION

