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## Disinformation and misinformation during Kenya's 2022 election

Implications for voter confidence in the electoral process

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**Disinformation and misinformation constituted a major dynamic during the August 2022 general elections in Kenya. The deployment of disinformation strategies by competing candidates to manipulate political perceptions and debates was compounded by misinformation. This policy brief explores the effects of disinformation and misinformation during the election and argues that they contributed to reducing the confidence of voters in the electoral process and the political system.**

**The brief proposes the adoption of a well-coordinated cross-sectoral approach to tackling disinformation and misinformation, particularly during elections. The intervention may include citizen sensitisation and studies to better understand the drivers, techniques and impacts of disinformation and misinformation, and mechanisms to counter them. Such an intervention is necessary to build voter confidence in the electoral process and safeguard Kenya's democratic gains, which is critical for political stability in the sub-region of East Africa.**

Digitalisation played a major role in the 2022 Kenyan general elections. The real-time transmission of polling station election results on the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) digital platform enabled a parallel tallying of the election results, enhancing the transparency of the election tallying process. Simultaneously, there was a rise in the use of social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, Telegram and YouTube, for information dissemination and political discussions. These platforms became new debating spaces, facilitating the exchange of political information. They also served as alternative sites for political discussions for people who perceived traditional media as having an ethnic and class bias.<sup>1</sup> Public trust in mainstream media in Kenya has waned over the years, as it remains strongly wedded to factional ethnic and class interests, thereby undermining its capacity to facilitate fair and open debate.<sup>2</sup> This is particularly true in the run-up to elections, and for this reason competing candidates feel compelled to use social media platforms to reach their supporter base and potential voters.

<sup>1</sup> George Ogola. 'Social media is being misused in Kenya's political arena. Why it's hard to stop it.', *The Conversation*, 9 March 2022, accessed 9 March 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Abdullahi Boru Halakhe. 'R2P in Practice': *Ethnic Violence, Elections and Atrocity Prevention in Kenya*, Occasional Paper (Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, 5 December 2013).

The evolving political role of social media also positioned it as an accelerator of misinformation and disinformation. Studies and reports discussed in this brief points to the widespread false or misleading information through videos and posts using shadowy and sophisticated networks of fake accounts, artificial hashtags, and well-paid influencers and bloggers to manipulate and sway public opinion and influence political decisions. This observation raises questions about the likely impacts on voter confidence in the electoral process and outcome. Recent academic contributions refer to the correlation between false messaging and rising distrust in the electoral processes, showing how the surges in disinformation and misinformation deepen voter mistrust.<sup>3</sup> It is, therefore, essential to explore the effect of information disorder on voter confidence in Kenya. This brief posits that the widespread disinformation and misinformation campaign strategies adopted by competing candidates in the election negatively impacted voter confidence in the electoral process and outcome.

The brief focuses on how the misinformation and disinformation campaigns during the election contributed to reduced voter confidence in the electoral process and its outcome. It draws largely on a review of research, and on reports by projects and election observation missions. The first section explores the importance of voter confidence to democratic systems. This is followed by an overview of the use of social media to spread misinformation and disinformation in Kenya. The subsequent section explores the implications of the spread of misinformation and disinformation on voter confidence. The brief concludes with recommendations, informed by gaps in existing interventions, to help stakeholders ascertain what interventions to build on.

## Voter confidence in the democratic system

Voter confidence in the electoral process, construed as voters' trust that their ballot will be counted correctly,<sup>4</sup> is a fundamental element of the process of representative democracy, the lack of which has implications for voter turnout and thus for the legitimacy of representative government. Following from the above, the relevance of online and social media platforms as information sources, and their influence on voter confidence in electoral outcomes, have gained the attention of researchers. Of particular interest is the use of social media as a tool for disinformation and misinformation. Although both terms, as forms of information disorder, overlap, they are also distinct. Whereas disinformation is the deliberate spreading of misleading information, misinformation is the unintended spread of such information.<sup>5</sup> Aspects of this information disorder have been explored on the continent. In a disinformation map-out exercise on Africa, the Africa Centre for Strategic Studies found that carefully designed campaigns with millions of intentionally false and misleading posts were pumped out into online social media spaces in Africa.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Gadjanova et al.<sup>7</sup> explored how misinformation spreads across broader media ecosystems, particularly in areas with varying internet access and limited connectivity. Findings from their studies shed

<sup>3</sup> Gabriel Sanchez, Keesha Middlemass, and Aila Rodriguez, *Misinformation Erodes the Public's Confidence in Democracy*, (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 26 July 2022).

<sup>4</sup> Lonna Rae Atkeson, Michael Alvarez, and Thad E. Hall, 'Voter Confidence: How to Measure It and How It Differs from Government Support', *Election Law Journal* 14, no. 3 (2015): 207-19.

<sup>5</sup> Claire Wardle and Hossein Derakhshan, *Information Disorder: Toward an Interdisciplinary Framework for Research and Policymaking*, Council of Europe report DGI(2017)09 (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2017).

<sup>6</sup> African Center for Strategic Studies, 'Mapping Disinformation in Africa', 26 April 2022, accessed 30 January 2023.

<sup>7</sup> Elena Gadjanova, Gabriella Lynch, and Ghadafi Saibu, 'Misinformation across Digital Divides: Theory and Evidence from Northern Ghana', *African Affairs* 121, no. 483 (2022): 161-95.

light on the flow of misinformation messages from social media platforms to offline spaces through existing 'pavement'<sup>8</sup> and traditional media.

Some studies have explored the use of social media and elections. Hitchen et al., for instance, investigated the impact of WhatsApp on the Nigerian elections.<sup>9</sup> They found that the social media campaign teams of the two leading presidential candidates used increasingly sophisticated WhatsApp messaging. More recent studies have identified the explosion of misinformation as a driver of reduced voter confidence. For instance, Alvarez et al. concluded that social media information was associated with a decline in voter confidence in the administration of the election.<sup>10</sup> Sanchez et al. also found that negative online messages that denigrated voting methods or highlighted alleged irregularities and accusations of voter fraud had an amplifying effect; voters became confused and overwhelmed, resulting in reduced trust.<sup>11</sup> Hence, it is critical to analyse the impact of the use of social media to spread false and misleading information, intentionally or unintentionally, on voter mistrust in the electoral process, as this has implications for democracy. In linking that to the focus of this policy brief, discussions in the ensuing paragraphs delve into the disinformation and misinformation during the Kenyan election, showing how this contributed to a decline in voter confidence.

## An overview of disinformation and misinformation campaigns in Kenya

Evidence shows that disinformation and misinformation featured in earlier elections, particularly, the 2017 election.<sup>12</sup> But it became much more prominent during the 2022 general election, with widespread use made of it during the election campaign, the voting process, and the subsequent declaration of the result.<sup>13</sup> A study by the Mozilla Foundation, for instance, analysed about 130 videos on TikTok (collectively viewed over four million times), which displayed content intended to spread disinformation to potential voters.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, work by organisations such as Africa Check, AFP Fact-checking and PesaCheck, showed evidence of the use of Facebook, TikTok and Twitter by competing candidates to spread disinformation and misinformation. The 2022 election observation missions report the joint African Union (AU) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the European Union (EU), and the Carter Center, expressed concerns over the population of social media with disinformation and misinformation. A project by the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) of Kenya, with support from the United Nations East African Region Office and funding from the German government and the Peacebuilding

<sup>8</sup> 'Pavement media' is the spreading of information, which may have originated online, by word of mouth on the street.

<sup>9</sup> Jamie Hitchen, Jonathan Fisher, Idayat Hassan, and Nic Cheeseman, *WhatsApp and Nigeria's 2019 Elections: Mobilising the People, Protecting the Vote* (Center for Democracy and Development and University of Birmingham, 2019).

<sup>10</sup> Micheal Alvarez, Jian Cao, and Yimeng Li, 'Voting Experiences, Perceptions of Fraud, and Voter Confidence', *Social Science Quarterly* 102, no. 4 (2021): 1225-38.

<sup>11</sup> Sanchez, Middlemass, and Rodriguez, *Misinformation erodes the public's confidence in democracy*.

<sup>12</sup> Patrick Mutahi and Brian Kimari, 'Fake News and the 2017 Kenyan Elections Communication', *South African Journal for Communication Theory and Research* 46, no. 4 (2020): 31-49.

<sup>13</sup> The surge in disinformation and misinformation during the 2022 elections corresponds to the increase in the percentage of active social media users in Kenya. According to the 2022 Global Digital report, the percentage of the total population who are active social media users stands at 21.1%, marking an eight-percentage point increase from the 2017 figure of 13% (Datareportal, *Digital 2022 Global Overview Report* (Singapore: Datareportal, 2022); Datareportal, *Digital 2017 Global Overview Report* (Singapore: Datareportal, 2017).

<sup>14</sup> Madung, *From Dance App to Political Mercenary*.

Fund (PBF) of the United Nations, documented many cases of disinformation and misinformation, and of hate speech, during the election.<sup>15</sup>

Observations of disinformation and misinformation during the election pointed to it increasing in the two months before the election and peaking during the Supreme Court's ruling on the election result.<sup>16</sup> A review of a project on detecting misinformation before the election, using an Artificial Intelligence (AI) tracking tool, showed that, on average, 15 percent of social media posts that were tracked weekly contained some elements of false information. This increased to 20 percent in the first week of September when the Supreme Court judgment made a pronouncement on the election.<sup>17</sup>

One of the tools identified across the various reports and research is the use of **bloggers and influencers**: individuals who post content on online platforms and are financially rewarded by campaign teams. According to the Mozilla report, the financial reward could range from USD 10 to USD 15 a day.<sup>18</sup> As noted in a presentation on “the role and impact of misinformation in Kenya's 2022 election”, candidates of the parliamentary, county and assembly elections had bloggers on their campaign teams.<sup>19</sup> The European Union Election Observer Mission (EU EOM) report also corroborates this, noting that parties and candidates extensively employed bloggers, influencers and digital campaign managers to shape the narratives of the presidential campaign and the general political discourse online and to spread disinformation.<sup>20</sup> The **buying-off of group administrators of existing Facebook and WhatsApp groups** by politicians to gain access to or coverage by group members was also observed. Linked to this is the use of **sock puppet accounts**: multiple accounts controlled by the same user, to amplify hashtags and create the impression of the popularity of opinions.<sup>21</sup> In addition, the use of **ghost accounts on Facebook or pseudonyms in Twitter accounts** to disguise the person or gender of the source of the disinformation has become a common phenomenon. For instance, a survey-based study on the use of social media during the Kenyan election showed that 16 percent of participants admitted to using or having used fake or dummy social media accounts.<sup>22</sup> Finally, another dynamic of the disinformation campaign worth noting was **the use of “coded language”, intentionally misspelt words, or words in the local language**, making it difficult to identify false messages easily. As noted in an article by AFP Fact Check, to mask or ensure that hate speech is not identified, campaigners use Swahili words and other local languages to attack members of various communities in Kenya and incite violence.<sup>23</sup> Also, posts and blogs contain deliberately mis-spelt words, making it difficult for AI to identify such posts.

An analysis of elements of the disinformation and misinformation campaigns by the various monitoring platforms points to three main elements: first, candidates seeking to

<sup>15</sup> National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC), *Online Election Observatory: Social Media Monitoring on Hate Speech & Incitement Ahead of the 2022 Elections Analysis of Emerging Threats: Reporting Period July 1-28, 2022* (Nairobi: National Cohesion and Integration Commission, Kenya, 2022).

<sup>16</sup> The Kenyan Supreme court upheld the results, affirming *William Ruto as winner* of the Presidential Elections. This was after the main contender of the election, Raila Odinga, challenged the results in the Supreme Court. The ruling speaks to the role of the judiciary in upholding the outcome of the election and averting the outbreak of conflict. (Nation, ‘Read: Supreme Court Judges’ Presidential Petition Verdict in Full, Why Raila Lost’, *Nation*, 26 September 2022, accessed 3 February 2023).

<sup>17</sup> Gharib, ‘Misinformation during the 2022 Kenya General Election’.

<sup>18</sup> Odanga Madung and Brian Obilo, *Inside the Shadowy World of Disinformation for Hire in Kenya* (Nairobi: Mozilla Foundation, 2021).

<sup>19</sup> Justin Willis, ‘Social Media in the 2022 Election’, (03:00–23:00), presentation in Democracy in Africa, *The Role and Impact of Misinformation in Kenya's 2022 Election*, video, 27 September 2022.

<sup>20</sup> EU EOM, Kenya 2022. *Final Report*.

<sup>21</sup> Odanga, *From Dance App to Political Mercenary*.

<sup>22</sup> Gabrielle Lynch, ‘Social Media Use in Kenya 2022 Election Campaign: Insights from a Political Actor Survey’, video.

<sup>23</sup> Mary Kulundu and James Okong'o, ‘Election Campaigning Ends in Kenya but Disinformation Battle Drags On’, *AFP Fact Check*, 8 August 2022, accessed 10 March 2023.

**discredit each other.** Reports and data published by the various monitoring platforms pointed to the spread of videos, posts and doctored pictures with content largely revisiting and falsifying past political events to tarnish the names and credibility of candidates of the election. Also, videos utilising dark historical events were used. A case in point was the revision of a video titled “enough is enough”, in which the then-presidential candidate William Ruto was accused of being a thief or land grabber.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, on 10 June 2022, an image published on Facebook, which has also been shared more than 60 times, showed Raila Odinga being attended to by medical staff alongside a claim that he had collapsed in his residence. The picture dated from 2017, when he was hospitalised with suspected food poisoning, but it was re-shared with misleading context to project the candidate as unfit to run for the presidency before being taken down.<sup>25</sup> Historical revision and falsification, largely used during July, were the most used techniques in spearheading narratives on social media.

Another element of the disinformation campaign was the **discrediting of the integrity of the IEBC and, by extension, the electoral process and outcome.** False information, including narratives about the IEBC and its officials favouring one political party, and allegations of plans to rig the election were intended to delegitimise the outcome of the electoral process. Manipulated videos and pictures of the IEBC Chairperson Wafula Chebukati were spread to propagate biased narrative about the United Democratic Alliance (UDA) party.<sup>26</sup> PesaCheck,<sup>27</sup> for instance, debunked fabricated claims that IEBC officials' bank accounts had been frozen due to a conflict of interest.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, there were widespread claims by the candidates' teams, and accusations that the opposing side could only win the elections through fraud.<sup>29</sup> There were many social media posts and counter posts spreading accusations of the two leading presidential candidates trying to rig the election. For instance, while a strategist from Ruto's camp accused Odinga's team of trying to rig the election on the basis that Odinga had urged the IEBC to use a manual voter register instead, a pro-Odinga blogger tweeted a link to an unrelated video insinuating that Ruto was attempting to steal the election.<sup>30</sup> These allegations fuelled debates on social media platforms and, as observed in the fourth week of July in the NCIC report, these negative campaigns resulted in many people starting to question the credibility of the IEBC and the elections, with some social media users expressing suspicions that the IEBC was working to rig votes in favour of presidential candidate William Ruto.

A recurrent theme in some disinformation or misinformation contents during the election was the **spread of hate speech and incitement to violence.** Content in several TikTok videos and Twitter and Facebook posts sought to inflame negative feelings of one ethnic group against another, with some content explicitly inciting violence. Most of these videos and posts referenced historical events, including revisiting the dark history of Kenya's 2007/2008 post-election violence. On Twitter, for instance, the hashtag #Rutomalizau-fungwe (meaning, Ruto, finish your term and go to jail) was aimed at metaphorically reopening the wounds of the affected people of the 2007/2008 violence to instigate further

<sup>24</sup> NCIC, *Online Election Observatory: Social Media Monitoring on Hate Speech & Incitement Ahead of the 2022 Elections.*

<sup>25</sup> James Okong'o, 'Old Photo Shows Kenyan Presidential Candidate Raila Odinga Feeling Unwell in 2017, Not Recently', *AFP Fact Check*, 5 July 2022, accessed 10 March 2023.

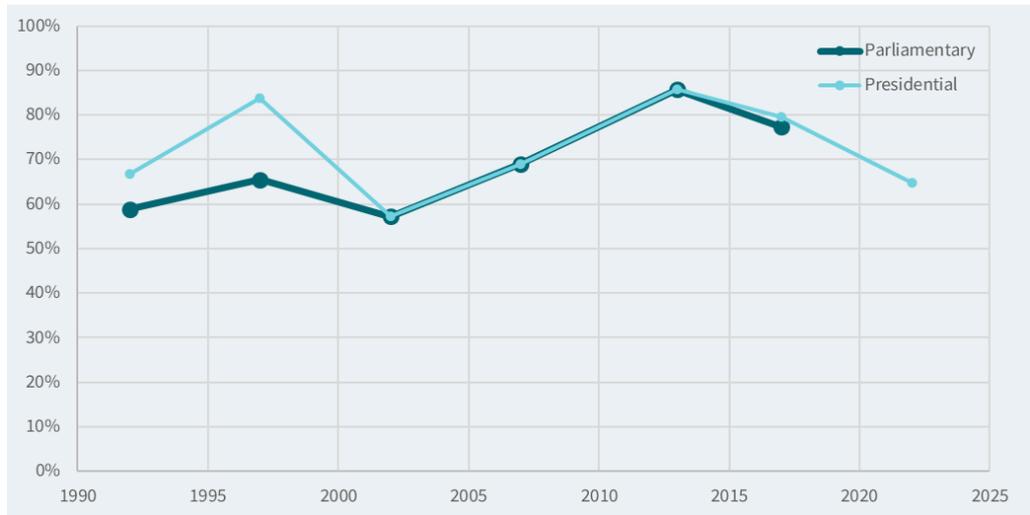
<sup>26</sup> NCIC, *Online Election Observatory: Social Media Monitoring on Hate Speech & Incitement Ahead of the 2022 Elections.*

<sup>27</sup> PesaCheck is a verification initiative to fact-check across Africa.

<sup>28</sup> NCIC, *Online Election Observatory: Social Media Monitoring on Hate Speech & Incitement Ahead of the 2022 Elections.*

<sup>29</sup> Kulundu and Okong'o. 'Election Campaigning Ends in Kenya But Disinformation Battle Drags On'.

<sup>30</sup> NCIC, *Online Election Observatory: Social Media Monitoring on Hate Speech & Incitement Ahead of the 2022 Elections.*



**Figure 1:** Voter Turnout 1992-2022. Source: International IDEA

violence. Some posts also sought to magnify the fear of electoral violence, increasing the feelings of tension and, at the same time, seeking to pit people against each other, based on party allegiances. For instance, a mis-captioned video was published on Facebook to create the impression that presidential candidate Ruto was inciting violence against other Kenyans living in Eldoret town in Uasin Gishu county. The video, as was pointed out by AFP FactCheck, rather showed Ruto urging the crowd to be peaceful during this election and affirmed that Uasin Gishu county was home to people from all communities in Kenya.<sup>31</sup>

There were several other cases of the publication of false information about violent situations. TikTok videos with unverified claims of the deployment of election gangs across different neighbourhoods in Nairobi, such as Kibera, Mathare and Githurai, were posted, seeking to incite young men to cause electoral violence.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, a Facebook post showed a shirtless man with a welted back claiming he was a thug paid to disrupt the Kenyan opposition rally.<sup>33</sup> Using a reverse image search, AFP Factcheck showed the image was a South African man who had alleged been assaulted by the police in South Africa in October 2021. In some cases, pre-poll zoning took place: political parties claimed certain regions belonged to them. For instance, posts were circulated implying that Meru was a zone for Azimio, while another post referred to it as a UDA stronghold. As noted by the NCIC, pre-poll zoning can potentially increase intolerance of other parties.<sup>34</sup>

## Implications of disinformation and misinformation on voter confidence

As a consequence of the **campaign to discredit each other, the integrity of the IEBC and the electoral process, and its outcome, as well as the spread of hate speech and the inciting of violence**, voter confidence in the electoral process and the political system declined.

<sup>31</sup> Okong'o, James. 2022. 'Video Miscalcaptioned to Create Impression Kenyan Presidential Aspirant Ruto Was Inciting Violence', *AFP Fact Check*, 4 August 2022, accessed 15 December 2022, <https://factcheck.afp.com/doc.afp.com.32FZ322>.

<sup>32</sup> NCIC, *Online Election Observatory: Social Media Monitoring on Hate Speech & Incitement Ahead of the 2022 Elections*.

<sup>33</sup> Mary Kulundu, 'Photo Shows Alleged Victim of SA Police Violence, Not a Thug Paid To Disrupt Kenyan Opposition Rally', *AFP Fact Check*, 2 November 2021, accessed 15 December 2022.

<sup>34</sup> NCIC, *Online Election Observatory: Social Media Monitoring on Hate Speech & Incitement Ahead of the 2022 Elections*.

The persistent spreading of videos, posts and doctored pictures of competing candidates, which revisited and falsified past events, created negative and discrediting images of candidates. This content likely reinforced existing negative perceptions of politicians in the country as manifested in the last Afrobarometer survey. Survey results show that at least one third of the respondents trusted neither members of the ruling party (36.8%) nor of the opposition parties (37.1%).<sup>35</sup> Thus, false content by the candidates discrediting each other reinforced an already existing voter apathy, making people less likely to participate in the election. Data on election turnout across seven elections since 1992 shows the 2022 voter turnout rate as the lowest since 2002 (see figure 1). The low turnout may also have been due to the numerous disinformation contents seeking to incite violence, creating fear among some of the possibility of the outbreak of electoral violence. With memories of how hate speech during the 2007 election contributed to the deadly violence after the election, voters feared for their safety. Outcomes of online engagements by the NCIC indicated that people were generally afraid of the likelihood of election violence.<sup>36</sup> Attempts to discredit the IEBC, the electoral process, and the outcome of the result had similar implications. The negative content denigrated the electoral process and the election management body by spreading false information about alleged irregularities and fraud. It amplified the electoral mistrust arising from the previous election in which the opposition party rejected election results, alleging fraud, and left voters with doubt about whether their vote would count. This is corroborated by the EU EOM report, which noted that the “extensive and sophisticated disinformation campaigns distorted the online political discourse, contributing to the erosion of public trust in the electoral process and affecting voters’ ability to make decisions free from manipulative interference”.<sup>37</sup> This conclusion by the EU EOM was based on observations and assessment of the electoral process in line with international and regional commitments for elections. The report also noted other factors, including the contentious legal battle after the election, intensified rivalry among the main contenders and against the IEBC, and the lack of information-sharing, coordination and planning between all agencies involved in the implementation of the Kenya Integrated Election Management System (KIEMS). However, the widespread disinformation campaigns during the election contributed to undermining the trust of the electorate in the electoral process by reinforcing memories from past elections and creating doubts about whether their votes would be counted correctly.

## Recommendations

Tackling the spread and impact of disinformation and misinformation requires a **cross-sectoral approach and multiple actors**. The complexity of the phenomenon requires engaging varied tools and actors from different sectors, including international and governmental organisations, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), and technology and fact-checking organisations. International organisations, including the UN and its agencies, must continue to provide policy guidance and programmatic interventions to countries to curb hate speech and foster social cohesion, particularly in conflict-prone contexts. The United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (UN PBF) funded a cross-sectoral project during the Kenyan election.

<sup>35</sup> Afrobarometer. 2022. *Summary of Results. Afrobarometer Round 9 survey in Kenya, 2022* (Nairobi: Afro-barometer, 2022).

<sup>36</sup> NCIC, *Online Election Observatory: Social Media Monitoring on Hate Speech & Incitement Ahead of the 2022 Elections*.

<sup>37</sup> EU EOM Kenya 2022, *Final Report*, 28.

The project, implemented through the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), contributed to enhancing early warning and response systems. An additional value of the project is that it connected national and sub-national actors, thereby contributing to a largely peaceful election. It supported a network of national and local peace actors to monitor social media platforms for hate speech, incitement, and misinformation and disinformation, identified over 800 cases and developed counter-messaging campaigns and narratives.<sup>38</sup> According to the project report, this contributed to the containment of incidents, and a reduction in the scale of violence. For instance, 90 percent of incidents reported to project partners were effectively managed.<sup>39</sup> The project also supported CSOs to engage in preventative efforts, reaching over 10,000 Kenyans through cross-border dialogues, peace concerts, and political dialogue forums. Interventions of this nature must continue.

The role of the national government is also critical in providing a domestic legal framework to guide the operation and use of these platforms. As noted by the EU EOM, the country's existing electoral laws do not reflect the increased use of social media, as it lacks adequate regulation and a code of conduct for parties engaged in online activities. Also, the legal provisions for the misuse of computer cybercrimes are vague on what constitutes "false", "misleading", and "fictitious" data, creating leeway for subjective interpretation and possible use of the law to harass journalists, bloggers, and activists.<sup>40</sup> It is therefore of essence for the country's cyber laws to be aligned with international standards and to foster the right to freedom of opinion and expression. The technology and fact-check companies and CSO platforms can also contribute to debunking and pulling down disinformation or misinformation. Meta and other platforms, for instance, conducted and engaged in efforts to disprove and remove such content from Facebook and Instagram.<sup>41</sup> Also, other local partners were engaged to combat the spread of misinformation and disinformation and improve digital and media literacy in Kenya, including the My Digital World and iEARN Kenya. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), through an EU-funded project, Social Media 4 Peace in Kenya, contributed to strengthening the resilience of civil society to combat the spread of harmful content online, including hate speech to incite violence.<sup>42</sup>

To avoid duplication of effort and to reinforce capacities, **better coordination of counter-misinformation and counter-disinformation efforts is required.** As already observed by EU EOM, there was a lack of coordination and multiplicity of efforts in tackling disinformation during the election, as different organisations debunked the same posts. Thus, a starting

<sup>38</sup> The network of peace actors partnered in the UNPBF-funded project comprises the National Steering Committee on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management (NSC), a peacebuilding structure that reports to the Minister of Interior. The Conflict Analysis Group (CAG), a sub-committee of the NSC, brings together government and civil society actors on peacebuilding. The Frontier County Governments Council (FCGC), a regional block of county governments from North and Northeastern Kenya known for being the most fragile part of Kenya and most prone to conflict. The Kenya National Commission on Human Rights is a national human rights institution constitutionally mandated to promote respect for and protection of human rights. The National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) is a statutory body established to, among others, promote national identity and values, eliminate discrimination, and promote national reconciliation and healing. The National Conflict Early Warning and Response System (NCEWRS) in Kenya is a proactive conflict prevention strategy launched in late November 2010 to support conflict prevention initiatives. The UNCT Prevention and Integrated Analysis Platform is a multidisciplinary UNCT platform for early warning and risk analysis. The UWIANO Platform for Peace is a multi-stakeholder peace platform co-chaired by NSC and the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC).

<sup>39</sup> United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (UNPBF), *Peacebuilding Fund Project Progress Report, June 2022* (Nairobi: UNPBF, 2022).

<sup>40</sup> EU Election Observation Mission Kenya 2022, *Final Report*.

<sup>41</sup> Mercy Ndegwa, 'How Meta is Preparing for Kenya's 2022 General Election', *Meta*, 20 July 2022, accessed 10 March 2023.

<sup>42</sup> Few empirical studies exist on the impact of such projects beyond the end of the project. Hence, future research could explore the impact of such interventions.

point for interventions for combatting future election-related disinformation and misinformation would be to create a nonpartisan platform to bring together all the relevant actors to facilitate the mapping out counter-mis(dis)information strategies, define roles and hold regular exchanges. It is important for such a platform also to engage local actors. The viability and the detailed layout of such an initiative would require further assessment. However, from the implementations of interventions funded by the UNPBF through the UNDP and OHCHR, one can infer that there is an existing national structure: the NCIC, which provides a starting place for the coordination of such interventions. In the last election, the NCIC, for instance, worked with a range of organisations at the national and sub-national levels, including a social media consortium led by Code for Africa and Uwiano Platform for Peace. So, an inter-agency committee led by NCIC is an option for better coordination among various actors to avoid duplication of effort and enhance the impact of the interventions.

**Digital education to sensitise citizens on disinformation and misinformation and its impact will complement efforts by tech and fact-checking companies.** With electoral periods characterised by civic education on the electoral process, these pre-election sensitisation programmes should also cover the issue of information disorder and how to spot it, and what actions to take. Since misinformation is born out of the unintentional spreading of false information, increasing awareness among citizens of the nature and impact of misinformation will help limit the spread of such content.

Recognising the threat that disinformation campaigns pose to the integrity of the democratic system, **further studies, including external project evaluation into the phenomenon to better understand the tactic, techniques and impact, and how to counter it, is important.** This will also enhance our understanding of the root cause and drivers of the phenomenon, which is critical to developing interventions to enhance voter confidence in the electoral process, reduce voter apathy, foster social cohesion, and increase the legitimacy of representatives through participation.

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