CONNECTIVITY FOR COMMUNICATION (C4C) - WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA



PRACTICAL SHEET

10 TIPS TO MINIMIZE THE SHARING OF MISINFORMATION VIA SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS

SOCIAL MEDIA CAN ENHANCE RISK COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (RCCE) STRATEGIES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC. HERE ARE 10 TIPS TO REDUCE THE RISK OF SHARING INCORRECT AND POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS INFORMATION.

1.PRESS PAUSE

- The speed of social media means we're often compelled to quickly hit 'forward' and share the message we've just received.
- It's critical to stop, pause and reflect before sharing we cannot risk individuals or families altering their behaviors in ways that can be harmful.
- Misinformation spreads far-and-wide, and corrections often gain very little traction.

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2. CHECK THE SOURCE

- Do you know the sender? Are these their words or something they have forwarded to you? If there is no obvious source of information, go back to the sender and ask for clarification.
- When sharing information to others always try to include the source (and the link to an official website if feasible). There are a number of online fact checking resources eg. <u>Snopes</u>, with dedicated COVID-19 content.

3. CAN YOU VERIFY?

- Can the information being shared be corroborated on the official website of the <u>World Health Organization (WHO)</u> and the national Government in your location?
- If the information is specific to UNHCR, can you cross-reference within your operation? If you're not able to verify, don't share.

4. IS THE INFORMATION USEFUL?

• The sheer volume of content currently being shared on COVID-19 is deafening. Consider if the information you want to forward is useful and actionable for persons of concern – does it provide advice and guidance on prevention measures and will it inform decision making?

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5. HAVE YOU RESPONSIBLY CONSIDERED THE EMOTIONAL IMPACT OF THE CONTENT?

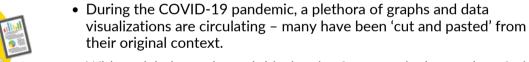
- Individuals' perceptions of risk are highly subjective and complex. Information that we forward 'en-masse' via social media may be seemingly harmless but may highlight specific risks for certain groups (e.g. individuals above a certain age).
- Consider if forwarding the content will only raise more questions and how you can target specific groups with tailored messages and minimize anxiety.
- Many UNHCR operations and partners will not have the capacity to answer individual messages, in real-time, if concerns are raised.



6. DON'T MISTAKE DUPLICATION FOR VERIFICATION

- Receiving the same information from multiple senders is not source verification.
- The viral nature of misinformation and disinformation sometimes makes it seem true because everyone is sharing; with such messages it's critical to fact check (as above).

7. DO YOU UNDERSTAND THE DATA?



Without labels or a legend this data is often meaningless and confusing

 avoid forwarding this kind of message as you're only contributing to
the 'data noise'.



8. DOES THE MESSAGE USE CRIMINALIZING OR DEHUMANIZING TERMINOLOGY?

- Such content assigns blame to those coping with the disease and feeds stigma, potentially leading to an unwillingness of individuals to seek healthcare, opt for testing or adhere to quarantine procedures.
- Avoid sharing content which speaks of 'plagues' or uses victimizing language this is particularly important in contexts where refugees/asylum-seekers are being labelled as 'infectious' or as 'guilty of spreading' COVID-19.

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9. ARE THERE TELLING SIGNS IT'S A HOAX?

- Often hoax messages will encourage onward sharing (e.g. "please share to everyone you know"). They often contain spelling mistakes and the sender may claim to be affiliated with the social media platform.
- If you're suspicious, it's better not to send.



10. DOES THE MESSAGE RECYCLE IMAGES?

- Often, content claiming to be 'breaking news' repackages dated content, for example using 'stock images'.
- If you're suspicious, consider running a 'reverse' image-search on your browser to determine if and when the image has been previously posted.
- This COVID-19 pandemic is evolving rapidly, be sure to share only the latest accurate and verified information avoid recycled content.

FINALLY

Information shared via social media will never reach everyone in a community and should only be adopted by one of the channels of communication as part of a comprehensive RCCE strategy. Digital divides will result in information disparity if complementary channels are not adopted.

USEFUL REFERENCES

For further tips and information on the COVID-19 response, please see the following guidance compiled by some of the main social media platforms:

https://about.fb.com/news/2020/03/coronavirus/ https://about.instagram.com/politics https://www.facebook.com/gpa/blog/messenger-101 https://www.whatsapp.com/coronavirus https://www.messenger.com/coronavirus

USEFUL CONTACTS

You can also contact UNHCR colleagues for additional support, questions and feedback:

Gisella Lomax Senior Social Media Officer Global Communications Service (GCS), DER lomaxg@unhcr.org Katherine Harris Protection Officer Division of International Protection (DIP) harrisk@unhcr.org

PROCESS C4C
TOOLBOX10 TIPS TO MINIMIZE THE SHARING OF
MISINFORMATION VIA SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS

More tools and tips

on communicating with communities are available on the website: <u>cwc.westafrica.exposed</u>

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