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DEMOCRATIZING DIGITAL

HOW-TO GUIDE FOR SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYTICS



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CONTENTS

ACRONYM LIST **3**

INTRODUCTION **4**

PART 1: USING SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYTICS TO RESPOND TO DIGITAL THREATS TO DEMOCRACY **5**

What is SMA? 5

SMA Use Cases 6

SMA Limitations 8

When to Use SMA 9

PART 2. HOW AND WHEN TO CONDUCT SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYTICS **10**

PART 3: CONTEXTUALIZING SMA WITHIN THE LOCAL DIGITAL ECOSYSTEM **12**

PART 4: USING SMA TO CRAFT MITIGATION STRATEGIES FOR DIGITAL THREATS TO DEMOCRACY **13**

Running Successful Behavioral Change Campaigns 13

Enhancing Fact-Checking Capabilities 13

Capturing Evidence with Digital Forensics 14

Combating Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) 14

Annex A: How to Procure SMA Services **15**

Evaluation Criteria 19

Annex B: SMA Providers **20**

Annex C: Organizations Working to Mitigate Digital Threats to Democracy in SSA **23**

Annex D: Further Reading **25**

ACRONYM LIST

API	Application programming interface
CfA	Code for Africa
CIPESA	Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa
CJID	Center for Journalism Innovation and Development
DFRLab	Atlantic Council Digital Forensic Research Lab
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer/Questioning, Asexual
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NLP	Natural Language Processing
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSINT	Open-Source Intelligence
SMA	Social media analytics
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
TFGBV	Technology-facilitated gender-based violence
UNHCR	United Nations Refugee Agency
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Introduction

Countries in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) are undergoing an unprecedented digital transformation. Digital technologies are revolutionizing industries, economies, societies, and governments. While these digital technologies have far-reaching potential, they can also accelerate and scale tactics that undermine the ability of citizens to exercise their basic rights and hold their governments accountable. As citizens and civil society leverage digital tools like social media and encrypted messaging to communicate, organize, and advocate, some governments and malign actors are deploying digital threats to democracy just as quickly. Digital threats to democracy refers to the use of digital tools and technology by the government, the private sector, or individuals to violate human rights. This includes online censorship and surveillance, social manipulation and disinformation, internet shutdowns, and digitally-enabled targeted persecution, as noted in the 2022 Democratizing Digital Landscape Assessment.

The increasing prevalence of digital threats to democracy—both globally and in SSA—aligns with the global trend of democratic backsliding observed in recent years.[1] Understanding and tracking digital threats to democracy and democratic backsliding is increasingly critical to efforts that promote positive digital development and digital democracy. Social media analytics (SMA) is an important emerging tool that can help USAID identify and develop strategies to mitigate specific instances of digital threats to democracy in its partner countries. SMA leverages social media data to provide valuable insights into the spread and impacts of digital threats to democracy—especially social manipulation and disinformation—and enable the informed development of effective mitigation strategies. In this way, SMA plays a pivotal role in safeguarding the integrity of the digital ecosystem.

The Conflict, Peacebuilding and Governance Division in the USAID Africa Bureau (AFR/SD/CPG) commissioned this report to provide USAID a practical guide for incorporating SMA into USAID Missions' operations and project, activity, and intervention design. SMA, which may be daunting to the uninitiated, remains essential for understanding and countering digital threats to democracy, in particular the threat of disinformation.

1 "Digital Repression Growing Globally, Threatening Freedoms," National Intelligence Council, October 31, 2022, https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/NIC-Declassified-Assessment-Digital-Repression-Growing-April2023.pdf.; "What's Happening to Democracy in Africa," Council of Foreign Relations, May 26, 2021, https://www.cfr.org/article/whats-happening-democracy-africa.

Part 1:
USING SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYTICS TO RESPOND TO DIGITAL THREATS TO DEMOCRACY

WHAT IS SMA?

Social media analytics (SMA) is a rapidly growing field within data science that leverages social media platforms to extract valuable insights and identify trends and patterns. It involves collecting and processing publicly available data and content from social media platforms, including text, videos, and images, to generate insights that support evidence-driven decision-making. Data scientists apply mathematics, statistics, probability, computing, and visualization techniques to organize and analyze social media data. They have developed algorithms and software—many of which are now used for both commercial and open-source purposes—to handle large-scale data analysis.

Initially created for businesses to track brand engagement and understand consumer behavior on social media, SMA has become an essential tool for documenting instances of digital threats to democracy and online human rights abuses. It enables the identification and collection of information regarding specific incidents of rights violations and plays a critical role in raising awareness, advocating for justice, and designing effective strategies to address and mitigate digital threats to democracy. In the development context, SMA also presents entrepreneurial opportunities for tech-savvy partners with local language capabilities.

SMA tools, methods, and practices are important resources for USAID staff and partners to identify and mitigate digital threats to democracy. In this way, SMA can enable the development of impactful programs that are well-informed about the associated risks of digital development and equipped with appropriate mitigation strategies.

BOX 1: SMA exposes brutalities against the Rohingya in Burma

SMA played a crucial role in exposing the Rohingya massacre. The Rohingya people are a Muslim minority group living in Burma. In August 2017, a violent crackdown by Burma's military led to the killing of an estimated 6,700 Rohingya, and over 600,000 Rohingya fled to neighboring Bangladesh.[2]

Because incendiary social media posts against the Rohingya played a key role in fomenting the massacres, it also became the primary resource for documenting and publicizing the events of the crisis. Rohingya activists used social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to share images and videos of the violence committed by Burma's army. SMA helped to identify and verify these sources of information and disseminate them to a global audience.[3] Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning algorithms sifted through the huge volume of social media content related to the crisis, with AI-powered systems analyzing text, images, and videos to detect patterns and gathering insights on the sequence of events and the extent of the violence.[4]

2 "At least 6,700 Rohingya killed during attacks in Myanmar," Doctors Without Borders, December 14, 2017. https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/latest/msf-least-6700-rohingya-killed-during-attacks-myanmar.

3 Mas, L. (September 2017). *Fake images complicate work of NGOs trying to help Rohingya.* The Observers – France 24. https://observers.france24.com/en/20170913-fake-images-complicate-work-ngos-trying-help-persecuted-rohingy; Rannard, B. G. (September 2017). *Rohingya crisis: What's behind these 1.2 million tweets?* https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-41160953.

4 Anuradha, R., & Atmakuri, A. (October 2021). *The Role of Social Media in Myanmar's CDM: Strengths, Limitations and Perspectives from India.* Institute for South Asian Studies. https://www.isas.nus.edu.sg/papers/the-role-of-social-media-in-myanmars-cdm-strengths-limitations-and-perspectives-from-india/#_ftn21.

With SMA, journalists and human rights organizations could verify the authenticity of the sources and the information provided. It also helped to raise awareness and mobilize resources to address the crisis. NGOs and humanitarian organizations used social media data to identify locations and populations most in need of assistance and to target their aid efforts[5]. Overall, SMA enabled human rights observers, journalists, and NGOs to expose the genocide and highlight the scale and brutality of the crisis to the world.[6]

SMA USE CASES

USAID Missions and implementing partners can use SMA to detect and mitigate digital threats to democracy in many different ways. For example, SMA can:

- **Observe and mitigate social manipulation and disinformation:** SMA's key capabilities include detecting and mitigating social manipulation and disinformation and providing policymakers, researchers, and others with a better understanding of how disinformation spreads on social media and who is responsible for spreading it. More specifically, it can:
  - **Identify disinformation campaigns:** SMA can help identify patterns and anomalies in social media data that may indicate the presence of disinformation campaigns. By analyzing social media user behavior, content-sharing trends and patterns, and keywords, SMA tools can highlight suspicious activities and flag potential instances of disinformation. Continuous data collection and analysis can provide real-time alerts and notifications when specific keywords, topics, or sources associated with disinformation are detected on social media. This allows for prompt response and the implementation of disinformation-countering strategies.
  - **Facilitate community mapping:** SMA can map and analyze networks of social media accounts or online communities involved in the spread of disinformation. By identifying the connections between online accounts that spread certain types of disinformation and the patterns of information flow, USAID Missions can better understand the structure and dynamics of disinformation campaigns.
  - **Identify influencers:** SMA tools can identify key influencers with high engagement within a disinformation network. Identifying such influencers helps build a more complete understanding of the major players in spreading disinformation. Direct engagement with these influencers makes it possible to challenge misleading narratives, counter them with accurate information, and address influencers' concerns.
- **Assess effectiveness of and respond to disinformation campaigns, including in conflict situations:** SMA can measure the impact of harmful disinformation campaigns by analyzing metrics such as engagement, sentiment shifts, impressions, and others. This information is crucial for understanding the scale of a disinformation campaign and to conceptualize effective counter-disinformation strategies. For example, geolocation can be used to identify links between targeted online incitement of violence—through disinformation or hate speech—and physical acts of violence. Once they have evidence of the link between malicious online content and associated offline conflict, social media platforms can activate their emergency and crisis protocols. As an example, Facebook's Crisis Response program typically involves establishing specific crisis information centers to respond to incidents by enhancing content moderation to curb

5 Elsayed, F. (January 2020). Social Media Role in Relieving the Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis. *New Media and Mass Communication.* https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/10af/536f59f05ac54211622416e48aaac17e6596.pdf.

6 Ganguly, M. (October 2020). *Burma is Playing Politics with the Dead.* Human Rights Watch. https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/09/27/burma-playing-politics-dead; Beech, H. (March 2021). *Myanmar's Military Deploys Digital Arsenal of Repression in Crackdown.* The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/01/world/asia/myanmar-coup-military-surveillance.html; Amnesty International. (October 2022). *Myanmar: The social atrocity: Meta and the right to remedy for the Rohingya – Amnesty International*, https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/ASA16/5933/2022/en/.

misinformation, collaborating with authorities for the dissemination of accurate information, and providing real-time updates and support.

- **Conduct sentiment analysis:** SMA tools can analyze the sentiment expressed in social media posts related to specific topics or events. This analysis helps identify the spread of negative or misleading sentiments that may indicate the presence of disinformation.
- **Do geospatial mapping:** SMA can map social media data to geographic locations to understand the spatial distribution and concentration of disinformation narratives. This analysis helps identify geographic clusters, hotspots, or high social media activity areas.
- **Identify online abuses and harassment of individual users:** SMA can identify individual users who are frequently subject to online abuse and hate speech and the patterns behind this harassment, which can indicate the presence of targeted and coordinated harassment campaigns.
- **Analyze censorship:** In some cases, SMA can help shed light on the extent of online censorship in a specific country and identify users whose content is frequently removed. SMA can also help identify alternative—but still widely used—platforms or channels less subject to censorship; this can help activists adapt their communication strategies to reach their target audiences while minimizing repression risks.
- **Detect and measure online surveillance:** SMA can help detect and measure online surveillance activities by governments or other entities. Patterns in the social media data can help analysts understand the scale and scope of any such surveillance.
- **Detect and verify content produced by generative artificial intelligence (AI):** New generative AI technologies make it possible to quickly create and disseminate realistic text, images, and deepfake videos, and these are spreading across social media platforms at an alarming rate. State and non-state actors worldwide are using generative AI to suppress online dissent and create high volumes of content to influence public opinion in their favor. New tools to identify generative AI-created online are also rapidly emerging, and they will be critical in responding to this threat. However, the effectiveness of these detection tools can vary, depending on the complexity of the analyzed content and the sophistication of the generative AI producing the content. This sophistication underscores the challenges in consistently identifying and mitigating the spread of AI-generated disinformation and deep fakes, and the need to continually invest in emerging technologies.

BOX 2: The misuse of generative AI in the 2024 Bangladesh election

The lead-up to Bangladesh's January 2024 election was marred by the widespread use of generative AI to circulate disinformation. Campaign staff of the incumbent Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, allegedly circulated an AI-generated video on social media spreading false information about opposition leaders' stances on sensitive foreign policy issues like the conflict in Gaza. The Tech Global Institute, a think-tank, and Witness, a media non-profit, both concluded the video was fake and likely AI-generated, the Financial Times reported[7]. A further two videos featuring independent candidates appeared on Facebook on the eve of the election, each purportedly showing a candidate declaring their withdrawal from the race. These videos were later identified by Dismislab, a Bangladeshi fact-checking organization, as fakes created with generative AI.[8] In spite of efforts to publicly call out these videos and other disinformation efforts in the campaign, Hasina secured a fourth term as Prime Minister with a landslide victory.[9]

7 Parkin, B. (December 2023). *Deepfakes for $24 a month: how AI is disrupting Bangladesh's election.* Financial Times. Retrieved March 21, 2024, from https://www.ft.com/content/bd1bc5b4-f540-48f8-9cda-75c19e5ac69c.

8 Raso, T. (January 2024). *Fake News of Candidate withdrawing from election circulated on Facebook using deepfake video.* Dismislab. Retrieved March 21, 2024, from https://en.dismislab.com/deepfake-video-election-gaibandha-1/.

9 Castro, C. (January 2024). *Bangladesh elections: censorship, AI deepfakes, and social media polarization.* TechRadar. https://www.techradar.com/computing/cyber-security/bangladesh-elections-censorship-ai-deepfakes-and-social-media-polarization.

SMA LIMITATIONS

Despite the many benefits of SMA in identifying and countering digital threats to democracy, it is not a cure-all. Its limitations and drawbacks include:

- **SMA cannot replace other digital development interventions:** While it can complement other digital interventions, SMA is not a substitute for implementing interventions such as digital literacy upskilling, capacity-building, policy reforms, and collaborative initiatives with social media platforms, civil society, governments, and the media, as mentioned in Part 6 of USAID's Disinformation Primer.

- **SMA reflects only general sentiments expressed on social media:** Because SMA data reflects only the opinions of people who use the internet and who choose to post publicly on social media, it does not capture the sentiments of *all members* of a given population. However, it is instructive of general sentiments in most cases. In addition, SMA does not typically capture mis- and disinformation spread on encrypted messaging applications like WhatsApp, which can also be important conduits for false information.

- **The rapid evolution of social manipulation and disinformation tactics outpacing SMA:** Policymakers, legislators, and disinformation experts are struggling to keep up with the fast-paced nature of technology innovation and the ever-evolving nature of digital threats to democracy and disinformation tools and strategies. As new disinformation mitigation solutions and tools are employed, malign actors will update their social manipulation and disinformation tactics to circumvent them.

- **SMA does not track disinformation appearing in traditional media:** SMA must be used in tandem with observation and analysis of traditional and non-traditional media coverage to generate a more holistic picture of social manipulation and disinformation campaigns in a specific context. Although much disinformation is currently spread through social media platforms, it continues to be disseminated through television, radio, and print and online newspapers.

- **SMA often occurs in silos, with a focus on the Global North:** Technology companies, academic institutions, journalists, civil society, and independent research entities often conduct SMA in silos, resulting in differing findings within the same context. In addition, these actors often conduct SMA on content generated in the United States and European Union. By comparison, fewer SMA efforts are focused on content generated in SSA and the rest of the African continent. Experts have expressed concern that this will perpetuate the examination of online harms through a Western lens that does not consider the unique characteristics of information landscapes in Africa. For instance, African researchers have found that users' genuine desire to share information with friends and family members—not malicious intent—can fuel the inadvertent dissemination of disinformation in some African contexts. This is compounded by a lack of sufficient fact-checking resources to verify the information on social media networks.[10]

- **Social media platforms are increasingly restricting access to their data:** Access to social media platforms' application programming interfaces (APIs) is crucial for effective SMA. According to IBM, APIs are "a set of rules or protocols that let software applications communicate with each other to exchange data, features and functionality."[11] Among other tasks, social media APIs enable researchers to collect large-scale social media data including posts, comments, and user statistics from a specific platform. This data is critical to effectively detect disinformation campaigns. However, recent rule changes, restrictions, and prohibitive pricing have made it more difficult for researchers to access data through some social media

10 Admire Mare, Hayes Mawindi Mabweazara & Dumisani Moyo (2019) "'Fake News' and Cyber-Propaganda in Sub-Saharan Africa: Recentering the Research Agenda," African Journalism Studies, 40:4, 1–12, DOI: 10.1080/23743670.2020.1788295.

11 "What is an application programming interface (API)?" IBM, accessed on March 5, 2024, https://www.ibm.com/topics/api.

platforms' APIs. For example, before Elon Musk purchased Twitter, the platform's public API was freely accessible and could be used by researchers to collect social media data in real-time as well as to retrieve recent historical tweets, subject to rate limits intended to control server load and ensure equitable access. Following the platform's sale, Twitter was rebranded as "X" and began charging for access to the API data. As of March 2024, researchers had to pay a $100 monthly fee to access X's API, and they could only obtain data for 10,000 tweets. (While X does offer a free tier for API access, this tier primarily allows users to test how the API works, rather than access data at scale.) X's highest-level API tier, "Enterprise," starts at $42,000 per month, demonstrating how prohibitively expensive social media data access can be.

WHEN TO USE SMA

While SMA can be used to track public sentiment on any topic at any time, it becomes especially critical during high-profile events that are known to be vectors of disinformation and digital threats to democracy. These events include:

- **Elections:** Disinformation can undermine the integrity of elections by spreading false narratives about candidates or issues to manipulate public opinion. Tackling disinformation during elections is crucial to ensure fair and informed democratic processes.
- **Public health emergencies:** During health crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, disinformation can spread rapidly and pose significant risks to public health. It is necessary during these crises to proactively address disinformation related to treatments, vaccines, and preventive measures and to promote the spread of accurate information that protects public well-being.
- **Social and political unrest:** Disinformation can fuel tensions, incite violence, and exacerbate social and political divisions. Mitigating disinformation in these situations is essential to promote accurate and unbiased information, maintain social cohesion, and prevent conflict escalation.
- **Cyber attacks and cyber incidents:** Malicious actors can use social media platforms to breach security systems, spread malware, and disseminate disinformation to manipulate groups and individuals. Addressing disinformation is essential for protecting individuals, organizations, and critical digital infrastructure.
- **Incidents of human rights abuses:** Online disinformation can spread false narratives, perpetuate discrimination and hate speech, and incite violence and human rights abuses. Mitigating disinformation is necessary to protect vulnerable communities, promote equality, and advocate for social justice.

Part 2:
HOW AND WHEN TO CONDUCT SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYTICS

SMA is a highly technical and complex data science endeavor. Given the complexities of and resources involved in SMA efforts, it is important for USAID and implementing partners to decide whether SMA will be conducted:

- in-house by a data scientist with experience in conducting SMA and with the requisite knowledge of the country's socio-political landscape to provide meaningful analysis;
- by procuring the services of a company specializing in SMA and then independently assess the validity of their data and findings; or
- by collaborating with or supporting civil society bodies with experience in SMA.

In general, there are four main types of SMA. A comprehensive SMA operation incorporates all four types to gain insight into current threats to democracy and human rights while forecasting potential future threats. This holistic insight is critical for devising effective mitigation strategies that are not only reactive to current threats but also preemptively plan for any future risks. However, the necessity for a multi-faceted SMA approach can vary depending on the specific context, the identified risks, and the information required. In certain situations, employing just one type of SMA may suffice to meet the operational needs and objectives.

TYPE OF SMA	DESCRIPTION	BENEFITS IN IDENTIFYING DIGITAL THREATS TO DEMOCRACY	LIMITATIONS
Descriptive Analytics	Descriptive analytics addresses the question **"What happened?"** It involves the collection, processing, and analysis of social media data to summarize past events and behavior.	Descriptive analytics interprets historical social media data to identify trends and insights on public opinion and reactions to events. Through techniques like data aggregation, it offers a detailed overview of digital discourse and it becomes possible to understand the occurrence and prevalence of disinformation campaigns and the tactics used to manipulate online narratives.	Descriptive analytics focuses on providing a summary of historical social media data, which may limit the depth of insights gained. It is therefore reactive, as it is focused on past events and trends, rather than offering proactive insights or predictions for future actions or outcomes on social media.

TYPE OF SMA	DESCRIPTION	BENEFITS IN IDENTIFYING DIGITAL THREATS TO DEMOCRACY	LIMITATIONS
Diagnostic Analytics	Diagnostic analytics addresses the question **"Why did this happen?"** It centers on quantifiable social media metrics such as likes, follower numbers, page views, and shares. It aims to assess the effectiveness of social media posts and campaigns and identify the factors contributing to their success.	Diagnostic analytics can provide insights into the root causes and factors contributing to certain digital threats to democracy. By examining social media metrics and engagement patterns (including reposts and retweets), this approach can help identify specific sources, influencers, and strategies employed to disseminate disinformation or suppress certain individuals or groups online.	Diagnostic analytics focuses on analyzing past social media data to understand the performance of disinformation campaigns or posts. While this approach provides insights into what factors contributed to the success or failure of campaigns it relies on historical data, which means it may not provide real-time insights into ongoing social media activities. It may not capture the most recent trends or changes in user behavior, limiting its ability to inform prompt responses to emerging issues or opportunities.
Predictive Analytics	Predictive analytics focuses on the question **"What might happen in the future?"** By using existing social media data, statistical algorithms, and machine learning techniques, it identifies the likelihood of future outcomes based on historical data.	Predictive analytics can assist in forecasting potential instances of digital threats to democracy such as the dissemination of disinformation. By analyzing historical data and observing online activities, predictive analytics models can identify emerging trends, anticipate future disinformation campaigns, and highlight potential targets.	Predictive analytics relies on historical social media data, not real-time posts or trends, to forecast future social media trends and behaviors. This means that factors such as evolving user preferences, changing platform algorithms, or unforeseen events can impact the reliability of predictions made via predictive analytics.
Prescriptive Analytics	Prescriptive analytics addresses the question **"What should we do next?"** It goes beyond explanations and predictions to recommend the best course of action moving forward.	Prescriptive analytics offers recommendations and strategies to combat disinformation effectively and address other digital threats to democracy. By leveraging insights from descriptive, diagnostic, and predictive analytics, prescriptive analytics can guide the development of targeted interventions, countermeasures, and policies aimed at mitigating the impact of digital threats to democracy, including online disinformation.	This is a highly complex form of analytics, requiring substantial amounts of data and the application of data science modeling. While it cannot replace desktop research and learnings derived from relevant disciplines, it can still provide useful information to guide future-focused decision-making.

Part 3:
CONTEXTUALIZING SMA WITHIN THE LOCAL DIGITAL ECOSYSTEM

Contextualizing SMA within the realities of a country's digital ecosystem is crucial because it helps ensure an accurate interpretation of the SMA data and provides important clues about the generalizability and reliability of the findings. For example, SMA draws from data that users post to social media; however, because SMA provides insights based on public social media posts, these insights will only represent the views of the fraction of a country's population that is active on these platforms and not the views of the wider populace. Comprehensive contextualization of SMA findings requires obtaining recent statistics about a country's digital ecosystem, such as the percentage of internet users overall and the number of mobile broadband subscriptions in the country. USAID's Digital Ecosystem Framework provides a framework for determining which statistics are relevant to contextualize SMA within a specific context. The first pillar of the framework—Digital Infrastructure and Adoption—is most pertinent for these efforts because it provides context that directly informs SMA generalizability and reliability, like internet bandwidth, network coverage, and telecom market dynamics, as well as barriers to digital adoption such as the gender digital divide and cost considerations. These types of statistics provide the "*whom*" to interpret the "*what*," "*why*," and "*how*" that SMA provides.

Useful external resources for country-specific digital statistics include:

- **Statista.** Statista can generate statistical reports for individual SSA countries on their digital infrastructure and adoption, including internet and broadband penetration rate; internet usage across gender, age, and race demographics; and social media platform usage (e.g., Facebook, X, YouTube, Instagram). A paid subscription is required for both basic access to statistics and more in-detail country-level reports and analysis. As of March 2024, a Statista "Starter Account" (basic statistics access) for an individual was available for $2,388 annually while a professional account (with reports and analytics) for a team with multiple users was priced at $11,508 annually.
- **The International Telecommunication Union (ITU)'s ICT Indicators Database.** This free public database contains statistics on ICT access and use at the individual and household level in countries around the world, among other data. It should be noted that ITU's data relies on self-reported information from countries and individuals; self-reporting can introduce biases, as respondents may provide incomplete, inaccurate, or subjective information.
- **Freedom House's "Freedom on The Net" report.** This publicly available analysis features a global overview of the latest internet freedom developments around the world, a ranked country-by-country assessment of internet freedom, and in-depth country reports.

After contextualizing SMA findings within a given country's local digital ecosystem, it is vital to cross-reference SMA findings with traditional media coverage in that country. This helps determine the pervasiveness and impact of disinformation messages or campaigns. Integrating SMA with traditional media analysis allows for more robust interpretations of SMA findings and helps practitioners make informed decisions around mitigating the specific digital threats to democracy facing a country. See more information on traditional media monitoring in Annex B of this guide.

Part 4:
USING SMA TO CRAFT MITIGATION STRATEGIES FOR DIGITAL THREATS TO DEMOCRACY

With SMA data and insights, development practitioners can formulate effective mitigation strategies to counter digital threats to democracy such as social manipulation and disinformation. This section suggests various ways potential service providers or partners in the non-profit sector can use SMA to mitigate the effects of digital threats to democracy. This list is not exhaustive, nor should it be taken as an endorsement of any particular groups mentioned.

RUNNING SUCCESSFUL BEHAVIORAL CHANGE CAMPAIGNS

In many instances, public awareness campaigns that incorporate behavior change approaches have proven to successfully address disinformation. Development practitioners combining SMA outputs with insights from behavioral science may more effectively analyze individuals' information-seeking and sharing behaviors within the broader context of decision-making systems. In this way, SMA can provide a greater understanding of how various social and contextual factors influence individuals' trust and confidence in sources of accurate information, such as reputable media outlets, and explain why people might rely on alternative sources which often spread disinformation. This gives development practitioners valuable insights into individuals' information-seeking patterns, their propensity to accept or reject information, and their vulnerability to believe in and disseminate disinformation.

ENHANCING FACT-CHECKING CAPABILITIES

Fact-checking is a key strategy in the fight against disinformation. It involves the systematic verification of information to determine its accuracy and truthfulness and the debunking of false claims, misleading narratives, and fabricated information circulating on social media and other media sources. By conducting rigorous research and analysis, fact-checkers provide reliable and evidence-based information to the public and help counter the spread of disinformation. Insights provided by SMA—specifically, predictive analytics—can help identify emerging disinformation narratives likely to gain traction amongst the wider public, allowing fact-checkers to concentrate their efforts on debunking narratives with the potential to reach the largest audience and cause the greatest offline harms. See Annex C of this guide for more information about specific SSA-based fact-checking organizations USAID can partner with.

USAID's Mali Peacebuilding, Stabilization and Reconciliation Program (Mali PSR) Builds Youth Resilience to Online Mis- and Disinformation

In 2021, the USAID-funded Mali PSR program launched a youth-focused training-of-trainers program to teach young Malian people fact-checking skills to help them debunk false information. In total, nearly 200 young people participated in this program across four regions in Mali.[12] Demonstrating their commitment to countering mis- and disinformation, participants set up WhatsApp groups on their own accord to share pieces of false information they had come across and discuss specific strategies for countering its spread in their home communities.[13] One training participant, a journalist and blogger, effectively used the fact-checking skills he learned to identify a false rumor spread by a southern Mali media outlet about the alleged arrest of a school administrator and worked with the outlet to retract the story.[14] Following this experience, this participant remains dedicated to identifying and countering mis- or disinformation through his social media channels and his own website.[15]

CAPTURING EVIDENCE WITH DIGITAL FORENSICS

In the context of tackling digital threats to democracy, digital forensics involves using digital investigation techniques and tools to uncover the sources behind disinformation (including influence operations) and understand how it is spread—whether through manual or automated means. Digital forensics techniques, paired with SMA, can give analysts and investigators evidence and insights that inform effective responses and strategies to combat the spread of specific pieces of disinformation and coordinated disinformation campaigns. See Annex C of this guide for more information about specific SSA-based organizations specialized in digital forensics.

COMBATING TECHNOLOGY-FACILITATED GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (TFGBV)

Technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) refers to instances where digital tools and technologies—such as mobile devices, the internet, social media platforms, or other digital tools—are used to harass, threaten, stalk, intimidate, exploit, or harm individuals based on their gender. Addressing TFGBV requires a comprehensive approach involving legal measures, awareness campaigns, policy development, increased digital literacy, and expanded support services to protect and empower individuals affected by such forms of violence. By cataloging specific instances of TFGBV and helping to measure its prevalence across the continent, SMA can provide researchers and activists crucial evidence to prevent its spread and mitigate associated harms. See Annex C for more information about specific SSA-based organizations with experience combating TFGBV.

12 "Mali Peacebuilding, Stabilization and Reconciliation (Mali PSR)," United States Agency for International Development, 2023, https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00ZR7X.pdf.

13 Mali Peacebuilding. United States Agency for International Development.

14 "Kayes: Countering Misinformation on Social Media," United States Agency for International Development, September 8, 2022, https://www.usaid.gov/mali/news/sep-08-2022-kayes-countering-misinformation-social-media.

15 Kayes: Countering Misinformation. United States Agency for International Development.

Annexes

Annexes A, B, and C of this report provide guidance for procuring SMA tools, types of service providers, and organizations focused on combating digital threats to democracy; and Annex D provides additional in-depth resources for SMA.

ANNEX A: HOW TO PROCURE SMA SERVICES

Finding appropriate SMA services can be challenging. It requires careful consideration of the assignment's objectives and requirements and prospective SMA tool developer's or vendor's technical capabilities, cost-effectiveness, reputation, and reliability. When procuring social media analytics services, it is ideal to include a data scientist in the evaluation process to ensure the proposed tools and methodologies are reliable and meet the requirements outlined in the scope of work.

USAID BUDGET SOURCES

SMA services may be procured as a standalone project or integrated into overarching programs. Funding for SMA services may come from various sources, such as:

- Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) funding
- Program Office funding
- Program funds
- Integration into implementing partner projects and scopes of work

TYPES OF USAID PROGRAMS THAT CAN BENEFIT FROM SMA

Because digital threats to democracy can affect all USAID sectors, SMA is increasingly relevant to all technical areas and geographies in which USAID works. Globally, online mis- and disinformation related to USAID's work—like public health outcomes, election results, commodities prices, and conflict actors—is increasing. USAID programs in any sector can use SMA to better understand the prevalence, virulence, and vectors of mis- and disinformation affecting the communities where they work. Examples from various USAID sectors include:

- **Election-related mis- and disinformation in the Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance (DRG) sector**—Mis- and disinformation about elections in African countries is rapidly increasing. Fact-checkers reported and exposed hundreds of false stories in relation to Kenya's 2022 elections.[16] USAID programs can use SMA to uncover how such stories spread on social media and potentially identify who is spreading this information.

16 "Election campaigning ends in Kenya but disinformation battle drags on," AFP Fact Check, August 8, 2022, https://factcheck.afp.com/doc.afp.com.32G83TD.

- Online censorship in the global health sector—Some social media platforms censor public health information, particularly about women's health issues and family planning and reproductive health, under the guise that it promotes "adult" content. USAID programs can use SMA to determine the prevalence of online censorship of specific health-related topics and terms and analyze associated patterns.
- **Digitally-enabled targeted persecution in the economic growth sector**—In several high-profile cases across the African continent (notably, in Uganda and Somalia), university professors and lecturers have been persecuted for their Facebook posts.[17] USAID programs can use SMA to track the volume of social media posts that target or harass certain individuals.
- **Online harassment in the economic growth sector**—Some digital financial services providers in Nigeria and Kenya pursue aggressive debt collection practices, including accessing the contact lists of borrowers who have defaulted on loans. These lenders then attempt to embarrass the borrowers by messaging their contacts to inform them of the borrowers' debts. If this harassment occurs on social media, SMA can help identify the perpetrators.
- **Mis- and disinformation in the agriculture and food security sector**—Social media-driven disinformation campaigns about agriculture and food security have spread false information aiming to discredit aid agencies, like when a disinformation campaign on social media in Ethiopia accused the World Food Program of providing the Tigray People's Liberation Front rebel group with food and arms supplies. USAID programs could use SMA in similar cases to track the origins and prevalence of online mis- and disinformation campaigns targeting the agriculture and food security sector.

See the Digital Threats to Democracy Sector Briefs for more information about how digital threats to democracy affect the agriculture and food security, education, economic growth, and global health sectors.

SAMPLE SCOPE OF WORK FOR SMA PROCUREMENT

Social Media Analytics for [USAID to insert purpose, e.g., "election observation" or "tracking health-related misinformation"]

C.1 PURPOSE

USAID seeks to acquire social media analytics (SMA) services that enable comprehensive, real-time collection and analysis of social media data pertaining to USAID activities in **[Region/Country]**. This initiative is designed to produce analytical reports that identify and document instances of **[Add issues that SMA will address—for example, mis/disinformation, hate speech, foreign malign influence]** on social media platforms and provide actionable insights for the development of effective mitigation strategies. The SMA services must be tailored to address the unique nuances and challenges associated with countering **[Add Issues]** in **[Region/Country]**. This includes the capacity to collect data in multiple languages spoken in [Region/Country], encompassing **[Language 1]**, **[Language 2]**, and **[Language 3]**.

SMA findings and recommendations are expected to support USAID's overall digital strategy goal of achieving and sustaining open, secure, and inclusive digital ecosystems that contribute to broad-based, measurable development and humanitarian-assistance outcomes and increase self-reliance in emerging market countries.

17 Toussaint Nothias & Rosebell Kagumire, "Digital Radical Rudeness: The Story of Stella Nyanzi," January 29, 2020, https://www.asc.upenn.edu/research/centers/center-on-digital-culture-and-society/the-digital-radical/digital-radical-rudeness; "Free To Think 2020," Scholars At Risk Network, November 18, 2020, https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/resources/free-to-think-2020/.

C.2 BACKGROUND/PROBLEM STATEMENT

The number of individuals using social media worldwide has vastly expanded in the last decade. Social media can play an important role in shaping public opinion around politics, health, gender, and other issues. It can also be a reflection of public sentiment in these areas, providing valuable information on public opinion and community interests or biases. However, social media may also exacerbate grievances and social divisions. There has been a noticeable increase in democratic backsliding in many countries around the world, and social media has become a space where digital threats to democracy, particularly social manipulation and misinformation, flourish. Social media analytics (SMA) leverages social media data to provide valuable insights into the spread and impact of particular narratives and help identify the source of these narratives and the threats they pose to democracy. SMA can inform program strategy, decision-making, and the development of effective information resilience efforts. In this way, SMA plays a pivotal role in safeguarding the integrity of the digital ecosystem.

[USAID to expand on country-specific context.]

C.3 STATEMENT OF WORK

The selected vendor will be required to use established social media analytics tools or develop new tools to collect data on **[Select relevant platforms]**, analyze the data to identify trends in **[Add focus issue(s)]**, and trace information sources and spread patterns if applicable. Findings will be reported with data visualization and accompanying analysis.

[USAID to expand on specific assignment]

C.4 ACTIVITY OBJECTIVES

1. To systematically conduct SMA work to comprehensively and in real-time observe and analyze **[XXX]** activities on social media platforms within **[Region/Country]**.
2. To identify emerging threats, trends, and incidents of **[XXX]**.
3. To develop and present proposed mitigation strategies and recommendations to counter **[XXX]**.
4. To establish a capacity-building component aimed at equipping local stakeholders with the skills, knowledge, and tools necessary to engage in SMA, thereby fostering a stronger and more resilient local digital ecosystem.

TASKS

The offeror is expected to complete the following tasks during the period of performance:

1. **Data Collection:**
    a. Establish and track keywords to identify suspicious activities and patterns.
    b. Collect social media data from the social media platforms widely used in **[Region/Country]**.
    c. Continuously observe online trends and content related to **[XXX]**.
2. **Incident Identification and Classification:**
    a. Develop criteria and methodologies to identify and classify online instances of **[XXX]**.
    b. Categorize incidents based on severity and impact.
3. **Analysis and Reporting:**
    a. Analyze collected social media data to detect trends, patterns, and emerging digital threats to democracy.

   b. Generate regular reports summarizing key findings, observed relevant incidents, and actionable recommendations.
   c. Develop data visualization reports and community mapping
      i. Create maps of relevant online communities and networks.
      ii. Identify key stakeholders, activists, and organizations within these communities.
      iii. Use community mapping to facilitate relevant outreach and engagement efforts.
   d. Influencer Identification:
      i. Identify influential individuals or accounts on social media within **[Region/Country]**.
      ii. Analyze their reach, credibility, and relevance to issues related to **[XXX]**.

4. **Mitigation Strategies:**
   a. Formulate effective mitigation strategies and recommendations for **[XXX]**.
   b. Provide recommendations on **[XXX]**.

5. **Capacity-Building:**
   a. Provide training sessions to enhance the capacity of local stakeholders.
   b. Develop SMA training materials and resources.

DELIVERABLES

1. **Comprehensive SMA Reports:** Regularly generated reports providing a detailed analysis of **[XXX]** activities on social media platforms within **[Region/Country]**. These reports should encompass relevant trends, patterns, and identified incidents.

2. **Emerging Threat Reports:** Reports highlighting emerging threats, trends, and incidents of **[XXX]** as they are identified, with a focus on timely reporting to enable swift responses.

3. **Real-Time Incident Alerts:** Establishment of an alert system to provide real-time notifications of critical incidents related to **[XXX]** for timely response and action.

4. **Mitigation Strategy Recommendations:** Detailed recommendations and strategies for countering **[XXX]**, including advocacy efforts, awareness campaigns, and policy recommendations. These recommendations should be backed by thorough analysis.

5. **Capacity-Building Materials and Training Sessions:**
   a. Development of training materials, resources, and documentation aimed at building the capacity of local stakeholders to engage in SMA independently.
   b. Conducting training sessions for local stakeholders to impart the necessary skills and knowledge for SMA work. These sessions should be designed to empower participants to collect data and effectively analyze **[XXX]** on social media.
   c. Periodic progress reports detailing the impact and effectiveness of capacity-building efforts, including the number of individuals trained and their increased capacity to conduct SMA.

6. **Language-Specific Reports:** Reports tailored to the languages spoken in **[Region/Country]**, including **[Language 1]**, **[Language 2]**, and **[Language 3]**, as applicable, to ensure comprehensive coverage and understanding.

7. **Final Comprehensive Report:** A comprehensive final report summarizing the project's achievements, including the effectiveness of mitigation strategies, the impact of SMA capacity-building for local stakeholders, and recommendations for future efforts.

PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE

The project will commence on **[Start Date]** and conclude on **[End Date]**. Regular reporting and analysis will be delivered throughout the project, with milestone reviews scheduled as needed.

This is issue dependent.

- Elections—a reasonable period for election monitoring would begin two months prior to the election and continue several weeks after the election results are announced
- Country Scan/Social Media Landscape Assessment—an assessment could reasonably be completed in two months
- Crises and Emergencies—highly dependent on the situation, but systems for media monitoring should be put in place as quickly as possible

RELEVANT QUALIFICATIONS

Qualified contractors must possess the following qualifications:

- Extensive experience in social media analytics
- Familiarity with the digital landscape in **[Region/Country]**
- Ability to access data on multiple social media platforms
- Ability to collect and analyze data in local languages
- Strong analytical skills and knowledge of relevant analytical tools and methodologies
- Proven data analysis, visualization, and reporting capabilities
- Proven ability to develop effective mitigation strategies, including advocacy, awareness campaigns, and/or policy recommendations
- Experience in capacity-building and training

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Technical	Innovative and comprehensive approach to accomplish the desired objectives in a reasonable time frame.
Personnel	Named personnel demonstrating qualifications in line with those listed above. Clear management plan with sufficient resources and qualified staff to complete the required tasks.
Past Performance	At least three examples of past activities similar to the work being requested and demonstrating the qualifications listed above.

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ANNEX B: SMA PROVIDERS[18]

COMMERCIAL THIRD-PARTY SMA TOOLS, PLATFORMS, AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

The global SMA market grew from $8.96 billion in 2022 to $11.54 billion in 2023. It is expected to grow to $30.99 billion by 2027.[19] Business research lists the biggest players in the SMA market as IBM, Google LLC, Oracle Corporation, SAS Institute, Digimind, Hootsuite, Talkwalker, Oktopost, Simplify360, Frrole Inc., Heuritech, Salesforce, Adobe Systems Incorporated, Clarabridge, Netbase Solutions Inc., Brandwatch, GoodData, Measured Inc., Sysomos Inc., Sprout Social, SAP SE. Rival IQ, Khoros,, MetaQuotes Software Corp., and Emplifi.

There are numerous SMA service providers, platforms, and tools. Some are free to use, and others are available at a high cost. It is not possible to conduct an overview of each tool and its capabilities; this guide limits its summary to tools that the research team believes can provide actionable insights, identify influencers, and help mitigate disinformation.

The list of tools and platforms suggested below is not exhaustive, and their inclusion is not an endorsement or recommendation. The list is provided to illustrate the types of services available to the development community and includes a mix of global and SSA-based tools, service providers, and platforms.

SMA, Artificial Intelligence, and Natural Language Processing

New AI-powered tools can automate SMA processes by providing data analysis and generating data visualizations. Developments in natural language processing (NLP) have automated aspects of fact-checking and detecting disinformation. However, experts argue that fact-checking is complex and requires subjective judgment and expertise.[20] While current NLP systems are increasingly better at addressing simple fact-checking tasks and identifying false claims, even state-of-the-art NLP technologies cannot match human capabilities in many areas and remain insufficient to fully automate fact-checking in practice. Claims buried in comment threads, in social media communities, and in audio-visual content are particularly challenging for automated systems to assess and verify. Therefore, service providers advertising automated fact-checking should be vetted cautiously.

18 These organizations are listed for illustrative purposes only, and this list is not exhaustive. This is a rapidly developing field with new companies and services coming available on a daily basis. This list does not constitute an endorsement or recommendation.

19 "Social Media Analytics Global Market Report 2024," The Business Research Company, 2024, https://www.thebusinessresearchcompany.com/report/social-media-analytics-global-market-report.

20 Das, A. et al, "The State of Human-centered NLP Technology for Fact-checking," The University of Texas at Austin, https://arxiv.org/pdf/2301.03056.pdf.

Cost: Contact Murmur for pricing.

Questions to ask: Does Murmur operate outside of southern Africa? Does the mapping include non-English languages?

SOCIAL MEDIA LISTENING AND SENTIMENT ANALYSIS

Brandwatch is a United Kingdom-based social media listening, publishing, advertising, measurement, and customer data management platform. Its social listening tools use advanced search parameters to identify popular topics and hashtags. It tracks anything from brand names and relevant topics, keywords and phrases. Its Consumer Intelligence solution gives clients AI-enriched data from over 100 million social media and online sources to help them understand consumer impressions of their brands, services, or products. Brandwatch also offers sentiment analysis in 16 African languages and marks brand mentions as positive, neutral, or negative. Clients can set notifications to get alerts if there is a spike in specific mentions of their brands. Brandwatch's clients include Nestlé, Unilever, Delta, and Toyota.

Pros and Cons:

- Pros: Uses African languages. Offers influencer identification, sentiment analysis, geolocation, and data visualization services. Long track record (over 12 years) of data yielding powerful insights.
- Cons: Users must be tech-savvy, and it is expensive compared to other platforms that offer similar services.

Cost: Contact Brandwatch for pricing.

Questions to ask: Is it possible to add other African languages?

Digimind is a social media listening and market intelligence platform with headquarters in New York, Paris, Singapore, and Rabat that helps enterprises transform online data into actionable insights for strategic decision-making. Digimind uses NLP to capture data from social and non-social sources in over 190 countries and over 200 languages. The company's Social Listening Solution harnesses the power of machine learning and AI-powered image recognition to perform "smart classification" of online brand mentions. For reporting purposes, users can choose from over 900 interactive data visualizations and fully customizable dashboards and deliverables to present their insights. Digimind currently serves more than 600 customers worldwide.

Pros and Cons:

- Pros: Advertises a tailored approach for non-profits. Offers audience intelligence, influencer identification, trend tracking, sentiment analysis, geolocation, and image recognition services.
- Cons: Difficult platform to learn and navigate.

Cost: Contact Digimind for pricing.

Questions: Does Digimind offer NLP services in African languages? (If necessary, ask for examples.)

TRADITIONAL AND NON-TRADITIONAL MEDIA MONITORING

Disinformation—whether it involves the replication or amplification of false narratives—can sometimes find its way into traditional media in SSA countries. This may not always be a deliberate act by a specific writer or editor; it could also be the result of harassment and threats from political actors who seek to manipulate the news narrative in their favor. There are also "fake news" outlets aligned with specific political interests. Therefore, an analysis of the traditional media landscapes in SSA countries is imperative to understanding digital threats to democracy in the region. This involves examining the affiliations of publications, their reach, the types of

stories they cover, and the sentiment of these stories. (Further, such analysis must be contextualized within each country's specific press freedom environment.) Specific statistical data on traditional media, including media outlet audience size and coverage, sentiment analysis, Advertising Value Equivalent, and media hits, are invaluable for these analyses. When combined with SMA, this approach provides a nuanced and comprehensive perspective on media dynamics in SSA.

Newsclip is a South Africa-based media monitoring service that monitors news coverage in print, broadcast, and digital media across South Africa and 53 other African countries. Its clients can choose the media channels, languages, and countries it wants to monitor. Its platform, Gate5, offers clients access to media coverage from specific outlets, sentiment analysis, and statistical reports.

Pros and Cons:

- Pros: Africa-based and affordable.
- Cons: Client list has not been published.

Cost: Contact Newsclip for pricing.

Questions to ask: What is the breakdown of outlets monitored in each country?

Meltwater, established in 2001, was one of the first companies to offer SMA and social media listening services. It is best known for its media monitoring and analysis of online news, social media, print, broadcast media, and podcasts. Its news monitoring tool tracks keywords connected to the topics and brands. Meltwater's technologies enable it to capture content from more than 270,000 global news sources, and it has several different options for TV and radio monitoring on a regional basis. Meltwater, headquartered in San Francisco, has over 2000 employees in 60 offices across six continents. Its Africa division, based in Cape Town, South Africa, has clients including Adcock Ingram Holdings, Dominos, AstraZeneca, World Wildlife Fund, Google, Coca-Cola, and others. The Meltwater Entrepreneurial School of Technology (MEST), Meltwater's non-profit arm, operates as an Africa-wide technology training program, an internal seed fund, and a network offering incubation services for African technology startups.

Pros and Cons:

- Pros: Premium consulting for tailored services and a simple-to-use interface. Comprehensive and customizable reports may be exported as PDF, Word, Excel, or PowerPoint.
- Cons: Expensive, and some SSA media outlets may not be covered by the service.

Cost: See Meltwater's pricing plan.

Questions to ask: Is Meltwater able to provide coverage and analysis of African-language outlets? Request monitoring of *all* outlets in SSA countries of focus.

OPEN-SOURCE TOOLS

- The Lexota Interactive Tool provides a detailed analysis of laws and government actions on disinformation across SSA to inform and strengthen the work of human rights defenders, researchers, and policymakers. In some countries in the region, governments have weaponized disinformation laws to undermine freedom of expression by arresting, charging, and prosecuting individuals.

- The non-profit data journalism initiative Code for Africa (CfA) gives citizens and journalists access to numerous open-source data tools.

- The Cost of Shutdowns Tool estimates the economic impact of internet disruptions, mobile data outages, or app restrictions during internet shutdowns. It provides the cost of internet shutdowns at a regional and country level. As of March 2024, the tool has put the economic impact of internet shutdowns in SSA at $431,831,912. Examples of shutdown costs at the country level include Nigeria ($119,735,696, or 55,258,023,852 naira); Zimbabwe ($3,985,767 or 1,283,416,813 Zimbabwean dollars); and Tanzania ($13,777,872, or 32,433,109,833 shillings).

ANNEX C: ORGANIZATIONS WORKING TO MITIGATE DIGITAL THREATS TO DEMOCRACY IN SSA[21]

FACT-CHECKING ORGANIZATIONS BASED IN SSA

Fact-checking organizations exist in some (but not all) SSA countries, and several SSA civil society organizations (CSOs) regularly publish stories about disinformation that they have debunked. To the extent possible, it is important for USAID Missions or IPs to form partnerships with fact-checking organizations based in the country where the work will be done, as they will have first-hand knowledge of local disinformation campaigns. In areas where no fact-checking organizations exist, USAID and IPs can partner with pan-African organizations including:

- PesaCheck: Established in 2016, this Code for Africa initiative is Africa's largest fact-checking organization, with teams in 15 countries. It currently reaches over 11 million people with over 170 fact-checks per month in English, French, Amharic, and Kiswahili, and it plans to launch operations in several additional African languages. Its content is syndicated to a wider network of media partners, ranging from national TV channels to real-time breaking news services on WhatsApp.
- Africa Check: Established in 2012, Africa Check was the first independent fact-checking organization in Africa. It identifies critical public statements, interrogates the best available evidence and publishes fact-checking reports to guide public debate. It has fact-checking teams in four countries: South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, and Senegal.
- Dubawa: Established in 2018, Dubawa is aWest African independent verification and fact-checking project initiated by the Centre for Journalism Innovation and Development (CJID). It operates in Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and The Gambia.

ORGANIZATIONS DOING DIGITAL FORENSICS IN SSA OR WITH AN SSA FOCUS

- Code for Africa (CfA), launched in 2012, is Africa's largest civil technology, open data, and data journalism initiative. CivicSignal is CfA's internal qualitative research arm that uses human analysis, NLP and machine learning tools, an. data-driven surveys and polling to produce actionable insights into Africa's media ecosystem, its emerging civic technology sector, and its broader digital democracy landscape.
- The Atlantic Council's Digital Forensic Research Lab (DFRLab), established in 2016, is dedicated to combating disinformation by exposing falsehoods and fake news, documenting human rights abuses, and building digital resilience worldwide. The DFRLab, which has staff based throughout SSA, has had notable successes, including exposing foreign electoral interference in African countries.

21 These organizations are listed for illustrative purposes only, and this list is not exhaustive. This is a rapidly developing field with new companies and services coming available on a daily basis. This list does not constitute an endorsement or recommendation.

- The Africa Centre for Strategic Studies is an academic institution within the U.S. Department of Defense. It was established in 1999 and is funded by the U.S. Congress for the study of security issues relating to Africa. It serves as a forum for bilateral and multilateral research, communication, training, and idea exchange between military and civilian participants. It has published numerous reports on disinformation, countering violent extremism, and foreign electoral interference and influence operations on the African continent.

ORGANIZATIONS WORKING ON TFGBV IN SSA

- Equality Now is an international organization advocating for the rights of women and girls. It works in Africa and globally to address various forms of GBV, including online violence and harassment.
- #ShePersisted works to end gendered disinformation and abuse targeted at women in public life. It produces original research on gendered disinformation, working with leading media outlets and think tanks to ensure that digital harms against women leaders are recognized and addressed as threats to national security, liberal values, and the human rights system. Its research spans over 30 countries around the world.

ANNEX D: FURTHER READING

- For beginners seeking more introductory information about SMA: Harvard Business School, *A Beginners Guide to Data and Analytics*. (2023) https://online.hbs.edu/Documents/a-beginners-guide-to-data-and-analytics.pdf?hsCtaTracking=2bb079d4-1f8a-4052-9548-2430ccb52d48%7C4d888017-3b60-48fb-abd2-754f4106abb4.
- The technical aspects of social media monitoring tools: NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, *Social Media Monitoring Tools: An In-Depth Look*. (2022) https://stratcomcoe.org/publications/social-media-monitoring-tools-an-in-depth-look/245.
- For actors seeking to use behavioral science to combat misinformation: OECD, *Misinformation and disinformation: An international effort using behavioral science to tackle the spread of misinformation*. (2022) https://www.oecd.org/publications/an-international-effort-using-behavioural-science-to-tackle-the-spread-of-misinformation-b7709d4f-en.htm.
- Recommended social media algorithms and their impacts on human rights policy: Belfer Center, Harvard Kennedy School, *Technology Primers for Policymakers: Social Media Recommendation Algorithms*. (2022) https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/files/publication/Social%20Media%20Recommendation%20Algorithms%20Tech%20Primer.pdf.
- The strategies used by actors spreading disinformation: Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy, Harvard Kennedy School, *The Media Manipulation Casebook*. (2022) https://mediamanipulation.org/sites/default/files/media-files/Code-Book-1.4-Jan-7-2022.pdf.
- A social media monitoring guide for elections intended for technologists: National Democratic Institute, *Data Analytics for Social Media Monitoring*. (2022) https://www.ndi.org/publications/data-analytics-social-media-monitoring.
- How researchers can use data from social media users in their work: Misinformation Review, Harvard Kennedy School, *Tackling misinformation: What researchers could do with social media data*. (2020) https://misinforeview.hks.harvard.edu/article/tackling-misinformation-what-researchers-could-do-with-social-media-data/.



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