

WORKSHOP REPORT

DISINFORMATION IN HUMANITARIAN CONTEXTS: LESSONS LEARNT AND WAYS FORWARD

WEDNESDAY 8 OCTOBER 2025, BRUSSELS

This report summarises the key discussions and insights from the 2 hours workshop “Disinformation in Humanitarian Contexts: Lessons Learnt and Ways Forward”, held on 8 October 2025 in Brussels.

The event, co-organized by [Fondation Hironnelle](#) and [VOICE](#), and hosted by the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, brought together around thirty participants from humanitarian organisations, EU institutions, and expert organisations based both in Brussels and beyond.

Building on the outcomes of the 2025 [European Humanitarian Forum](#), the workshop, held under Chatam House Rule to enable an open exchange, aimed to examine how disinformation and misinformation are reshaping humanitarian action — eroding trust, limiting access, and endangering both communities and aid workers. In an interactive setting, participants identified lessons learned, shared good practices, and proposed ways forward to strengthen the resilience of humanitarian actors and ensure that affected populations can access reliable, life-saving information.

**The content of this report does not necessarily reflect the views or positions of the meeting organizers.*



1. Disinformation Context and Problem Definition

Disinformation, misinformation, malinformation and information manipulation are increasingly affecting humanitarian operations. What was once a neutral space for humanitarian action has become politicised. Both state and non-state, foreign and domestic actors deliberately use information distortion to damage the credibility of humanitarian organisations and their partners — including the EU — and to undermine humanitarian principles.

These manipulations restrict access, undermine protection and as such endanger affected communities. They also expose humanitarian workers to reputational, legal, and physical risks. In some contexts (e.g. Sahel, Sudan, migration routes), false narratives have led to accusations of bias, political interference, or illegality.

2. Forms and Channels of Information Manipulation

Three major patterns were identified:

- **Targeted disinformation:** Intentional campaigns (by state or non-state actors) to discredit humanitarian actors or question their neutrality, mixing up communication strategies with fact-based information.
- **State-led manipulation:** Strategies to limit humanitarian space or delegitimise aid providers.
- **Misinformation:** Unintentional diffusion of incomplete or distorted content via social, traditional, or community channels.

These narratives spread not only online but also through radio, television, marketplaces, and community gatherings, eroding trust and amplifying polarisation. Artificial intelligence tools increasingly accelerate the speed and reach of false content.

3. Consequences for Humanitarian Action

- **Erosion of trust** between humanitarian actors and local communities and authorities, complicating access and coordination.
- **Operational and security risks**, including harassment or physical threats
- **Reputational damage** for organisations and donors.
- **Criminalisation of humanitarian work** in some regions, through accusations of political bias or misconduct.

Ultimately, the manipulation of information undermines humanitarian principles of neutrality, independence, and impartiality.

4. Key Responses and Priorities

A. Strengthening Analysis and Monitoring

- Encourage cross-sectoral coordination between humanitarian, media, and policy actors.
- Integrate information risk assessments into security and operational planning.
- Develop systematic monitoring mechanisms to detect and analyse disinformation trends, develop tailored response protocols for different types of disinformation scenarios, use existing tools (such as audience surveys) and toolkits[1] to inform responses.

B. Building Capacity and Resilience

- Train humanitarian staff to recognise and respond to information manipulation and misinformation, as well as to speak to the media and overcome the 'media fear'
- Support local journalists in ethical and accurate reporting, reducing the space for rumours.
- Strengthen/Build the capacity of local journalists to report accurately and ethically on humanitarian issues.
- Promote solutions-oriented journalism, to respond to news fatigue and disengagement.
- Empower communities through information literacy to critically assess information

[1] Existing resources/toolkits mentioned include the following ones:

• <https://www.unhcr.org/handbooks/informationintegrity/>

• <https://www.icrc.org/en/publication/addressing-harmful-information-conflict-settings-response-framework-humanitarian>

https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/resources-campaigns/information-manipulation-and-misinformation_en

C. Rebuilding Trust through Engagement

- Partner with local media and community networks to exchange credible and accessible information in local languages
- Foster dialogue with affected populations to address polarisation and misinformation
- Promote initiatives that highlight the value and independence of humanitarian action
- Develop strong, coherent narratives in defence of humanitarian action and invest in joint, strategic communication efforts across the sector.



5. Policy Implications

1. **Information is aid.** Treat access to accurate information as a core humanitarian deliverable.
2. **Invest in coordination mechanisms** linking humanitarian, media, and donors.
3. **Support relevant international, regional and local frameworks** to address disinformation in crisis contexts.
4. **Integrate strategies to address dis/mis/mal-information** into humanitarian programming and funding.



6. Conclusions

Addressing disinformation requires a multidisciplinary, preventive approach. Strengthening trust, local partnerships, and media literacy are essential to protect humanitarian space. The humanitarian community — together with donors and media actors — must reaffirm and embody what humanitarian action is about: principled, community-driven and coherent.