Expert dialogue

Addressing Disinformation in Africa:
Strengthening data management & citizen skills

Friday, June 23rd, 2023
8:00–9:30 EDT / 12:00–13:30 GMT / 15:00-16:30 EAT
Virtual Event: https://kas-de.zoom.us/j/96879263518

Africa's youth population is growing rapidly, and it is expected that by 2050, the majority of young people in the world will live on the continent. However, there are not enough decent jobs to absorb the up to 20 million young Africans entering the labor market each year. At the same time the globe is quickly being dominated by digitalization and jobs now often require expertise in digital skills – from foundational digital literacy to highly complex skills to harness the benefits of artificial intelligence (AI), blockchain and nanocomputing. The World Bank Group indicates that 230 million jobs in Africa will require basic digital skills by 2030.

While these trends are promising, digitalization also contributes to accelerating the spread of disinformation and raises new concerns about diverse issues including human rights[1], electoral processes[2], public health, armed conflict and climate change. In the African region, disinformation campaigns have contributed to political divisions and growing mistrust in governing institutions due to interferences in electoral processes. AI, with its expanding role in society and potential for misuse, also poses significant ethical questions.

In this context, African nations face critical decisions regarding the type of data models to adopt, and how to protect the authenticity of information in the age of AI. Urgent steps need to be taken by both States and private sector enterprises to ensure that digitalization is a force for citizen empowerment, rather than division.

It is critical to strike the right balance in managing online spaces and technologies to protect democracies, human rights, public safety and to

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[1] The General Assembly and the Human Rights Council have called for responses to the spread of disinformation to promote and protect individuals' freedom of expression and freedom to seek, receive and impart information as established by Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 19 (1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. See also the United Nations Report of the Secretary-General on countering disinformation for the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms (A/77/287), 12 August 2022, available at www.un.org/en/countering-disinformation.

[2] Eleonore Pauwels, "The Anatomy of Information Disorders in Africa", *Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung*, July 2020. Available at: www.kas.de/en/web/newyork/single-title/-/content/the-anatomy-of-information-disorders-in-africa.

achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Policymakers should consider measures to enhance media and information literacy, capacity-building for prevention and resilience, and awareness-raising to counter all forms of disinformation and encourage citizens to think critically about the information they encounter on digital platforms.[3] This includes the responsibility of businesses to conduct human rights due diligence to ensure that technology and data governance practices comply with human rights principles. For instance, some technology companies have adapted their data management practices to provide the public with more information regarding dis- or mis-information. There is also a strong need for national legislation and normative frameworks for ethical data and AI governance models.

Given this background, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (**KAS**), the International Organization for Employers (**IOE**) and the African Center for Economic Transformation (**ACET**) are convening expert dialogues among policymakers, development partners and other stakeholders to identify concrete policy actions to accelerate the development of digital skills in Africa. The initiative includes three informal, virtual expert dialogues, culminating in an event at the UN High-Level Political Forum in July 2023. The second expert dialogue will take place on **June 23, 2023**, on the theme of **Disinformation, Data Management, and Citizen Skills**, coordinated by KAS.

This dialogue will consider the following questions:
- How can governments and other stakeholders help build digital literacy and citizen skills to recognize disinformation?
- What kinds of data and AI governance norms should be put in place by government and private sector stakeholders to ensure personal data protection, while ensuring respect for human rights?
- How can we foster collaborations and partnerships with young innovators in Africa in their effort to strengthen digital literacy skills?

Discussion will draw on the diverse perspectives of representatives from Government, the UN system, civil society and academia.

The event will take place via Zoom. To confirm your attendance, please RSVP to Erica.mumford@kas.de by Tuesday, 20 June.

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[3] Relevant policy recommendations on digital education can be found in General Assembly Resolution 76/227 on countering disinformation for the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms (A/Res/76/227); the Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation (A/74/821); and the African Union's Digital Education Strategy and Implementation Plan.

Agenda

8:00 h (7 minutes)	**Welcome remarks** Ms. Mariagrazia Squicciarini, PhD Director a.i., Chief, Executive Office, Social and Human Sciences Sector, UNESCO
8:10 h (10 minutes each)	**Input by discussants** *Media literacy and civic education of the youth in Ethiopia* Mr. Befekadu Hailu, Executive Director, Center for Advancement of Rights and Democracy (CARD) *Balancing intellectual property law, data privacy regulations, and human rights* Dr. Robert Muthuri, Advocate of the High Court of Kenya, LLM Innovation Technology and the Law, Edinburgh, PhD Legal Informatics *Approaches to governance in the era of generative AI and disinformation* Ms. Eleonore Pauwels, Senior Fellow, Global Center on Cooperative Security *Collaborating with nonpartisan factcheckers and African youth to build media & information literacy* Ms. Dudu Mkhize, Head of Outreach, Africa Check
9:00 h	**Open discussion** **Moderator:** Ms. Andrea E. Ostheimer, KAS Representative to the United Nations, New York
9:25 h	**Closing remarks** Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung

Organization:	KAS New York Phone: +1 646 852 6500 newyork@kas.de
Venue:	Online Zoom Seminar **Zoom Link:** https://kas-de.zoom.us/j/96879263518 **Meeting ID:** 968 7926 3518

English-French interpretation will be provided.