How to Deal with Misinformation?

Rooted in Trust (RiT) is a USAID Bureau of Humanitarian Affairs (BHA)-funded project run by Internews to support humanitarian and public health agencies understand and manage the spread of rumors and misinformation about COVID-19 and recently expanded to cover other health topics, as well as food security. Our work focuses on strengthening the information ecosystem by ensuring that communities have access to reliable, actionable, and contextual information that responds to their concerns and information needs. The RiT project has been implemented since August 2020 and will go on until June 30, 2023.

**WHAT IS A HEALTHY INFORMATION ECOSYSTEM?**

- Have training and education that encourages a critical evaluation of information
- Have access to locally relevant and reliable information
- Have access to resources to verify the information when they have questions
- Can inform decision-makers about their needs, concerns, questions, and ideas
- Welcome feedback, questions, and ideas, and people do not fear consequences when being critical about how decisions are made

**FACT CHECKING**

- Examine whether statements, comments or posts are true or false
- Keep in mind that in a crisis, rumors can emerge easily from a simple misunderstanding or a change of policy or the truth can be co-opted.
- Often parts of a statement may be based on fact, while others point to a misunderstanding or entirely false information.
- Check trusted sources for information, research, or facts about the topic. Sources matter!

**REALITY CHECKING: HOW DO I RESPOND TO MISINFORMATION IN A CLEAR AND RELEVANT MANNER?**

- Reality-checking is about making sure the information you provide in response to a rumor is relevant for the audience you intend it for. This is the most important stage of responding to a rumor!
- You need to construct a response that is contextualized and provides a way forward, as well as ask for feedback regularly.
- Sources matter: The first is to think deeply about the sources you cite in response to your rumor. When choosing your sources, you should not only focus on whether you find them trustworthy but also on how your intended targeted audience might react or perceive those sources.
- Be relatable: Avoid scientific jargon and pair scientific evidence with narratives that speak to your audiences’ beliefs and values. It is very important that any response is non-judgmental and comes from a place of empathy and understanding.
- Provide a way forward: Your response should have actionable content which gives your target audience the appropriate tools to move forward. Provide actionable information that gives the community something they can actively do to improve their situation.

**VERIFICATION**

- Examine whether a graphic piece (Videos, Photos and Images) of information is real or fake when possible
- Check:
  - The origin/fake or not
  - The source
  - The date the content picture was taken
  - The location of the content picture
  - The motivation: why was this piece captured?