

**A Qualitative Evaluation of Africa Check's Contributions to
Fact Checking in Nigeria**

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFP	Agence France Presse
AI	Artificial Intelligence
APC	All Progressives Congress
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
FCT	Federal Capital Territory
INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission
IO	Information Operations
IW	Information Warfare
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NCDC	Nigeria Center for Disease Control
NTA	Nigerian Television Authority
PDP	People's Democratic Party
SIO	Strategic Information Operations
UK	United Kingdom
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USA	United State of America
WHO	World Health Organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Even though countries including Nigeria cannot be seen to have securitised information disorder (fake news, mal-information dis-information, and misinformation), its manifestations posed existential threat to the Nigerian state because of the consequences on state-society relations, inter-group relations, citizens' sense of belonging, democracy, and media practice in the country. Within seven years of being in Nigeria, Africa Check has creditably, admirably and strategically led from the front in confronting information disorder in two battles: one global – the Covid-19 pandemic and one local – the 2023 elections.

Not resting on its oars and mindful of the risk of complacency, the Africa Check commissioned a qualitative evaluation of its operations through the eyes and voices of its partners towards having recommendations that would achieve the following:

- ✓ Building and maintaining the institutional capacity of Africa Check's Nigeria office and selected media partners to fact-check claims made in public debate in Nigeria about health and development.
- ✓ Reducing the harm done by false and misleading claims on health and development topics made by policy makers, institutions, the media, and the public in Nigeria.
- ✓ Increasing the knowledge and awareness of evidence-based health and development topics by policy makers, media, and relevant institutions.

Towards realising the expected outcomes, the primary investigator with its team developed an instrument for generating data that guided the semi-structured interaction with the pre-determined respondents from April to July 2023.

The findings revealed the acknowledgements of the positive and unprecedented impact resulting from the capacity-building initiatives of the Africa Check that have made all the critical stakeholders in the information ecosystem in the country comprising actors in the media (broadcast, print, offline and online), civil society, government institutions, experts and thought-leaders primarily in public health and development and secondarily in the overall information ecosystem in the country effective in fact-checking. The findings also revealed their expectations from the Africa Check in Nigeria which have informed the recommendations below which are elaborated in the study:

- ✓ A one-day validation of the report of the evaluation
- ✓ Incorporating of the feedbacks from the validation into its action plans in the short and medium term, that is, before the next elections in 2027
- ✓ A consensus-based and locale-specific needs assessment of actors in the information ecosystem towards tailored and thematic capacity building in fact-checking

- ✓ Exploration of means to fund the expansion of its activities to transcend strictly public health education and fact-checking to cover other aspects of civic life.
- ✓ Contemplation of talks towards establishing Centres of Excellence for Graduate Studies/degree across the country's geo-political zones on Verification/Fact-Checking, Early Warning and National Security towards building a critical mass of fact-checkers

INTRODUCTION

1.0. Background: Meeting Africa Check

Now a leader within the fact-checking ecosystem in Africa, Africa Check was founded in 2012 as the continent's first independent fact-checking organization in South Africa. Initially, it had a junior researcher and part-time editor. According to Anim van Wyk¹,

Africa Check then opened a second office on the continent in Dakar, Senegal, in October 2015. Here the team runs a French-language version of the website to serve West African audiences. The English-language team branched out to Lagos, Nigeria, in November 2016 with Nairobi in Kenya following in January 2017. By mid-2019, the organisation employed 24 full-time and four part-time people across the continent.

Since inception on June 26, 2012, Africa Check has sustained its commitment to ensuring and entrenching accuracy in the dissemination of information in Africa. Although mostly known for its verification of health and development claims, Africa Check verifies claims that directly and indirectly affects broader topics like politics, elections, economy, statistics, and security.

The spelled out aims of Africa Check are to reduce the circulation of fake and misleading claims of government officials, politicians, media houses, online influencers, ordinary people, and all involved in the communication universe of Africa. The second aim is to spread and empower others to share accurate information on salient issues so that the public will be correctly informed and able to make informed decisions. The third aim is to make accessible to policy makers and the public a more precise understanding of germane issues towards bridging the gap between them and the public. This third aim resonates with one of the concerns raised by Fareed Zakaria² as lessons of the COVID-19 pandemic which is that “people should

¹ Anim van Wyk. 2019. *The Fact-Checking Preferences of Africacheck.Org's Audiences in Nigeria, Kenya, and South Africa*. Reuters Institute Fellowship Paper and University of Oxford

² Fareed Zakaria. 2020. *Ten Lessons for a Post-Pandemic World*. London: Penguin Books. P. 75

listen to experts and experts should listen to the people.” This cannot be over emphasized given the mistrust that information disorder sows into state-society relationship.

1.1.The Present Evaluation

How can we tell whether we have met our objectives?
If we have met them, for whom have we done so and
under what circumstances? Are we taking the right
actions? Are we meeting the needs of our various
stakeholders?³

Irrespective of disciplines, and scope of interest, players in the Third Sector where non-profit, civil society and other apolitical philanthropic organizations operate are constantly faced with the set of questions posed in the excerpt above. Therefore, the deliberate decision of Africa Check to commission what qualifies as an *outcome evaluation*⁴, designed to “measure the effects of programs or initiatives”⁵ is revealing of its mindfulness of the need to constantly improve and innovate as well as staying in track in the pursuit of its objectives.

As an *outcome evaluation* of Africa Check in Nigeria, it comes against the backdrop of the organization’s commitment to ensuring that publicly available information is not misleading, false, or inaccurate. Africa Check posits that sanitising the information dissemination space in Nigeria must be taken as a priority given the damage that was caused by the rumour that the polio vaccine makes one prone to infertility and designed to reduce the population of Muslims⁶ in 2002 and 2003. Although baseless and unfounded, it was strong enough to dissuade many communities in northern Nigeria to boycott vaccination against polio. The doubt of the northern public was not

³Anastasopoulos, V., L. Décoret, P. Madriaza, D. Morin and M. Johnson (2023). *Guide to evaluating programs for preventing violent extremism*. UNESCO Chair in Prevention of Radicalization and Violent Extremism, Université de Sherbrooke. P. 9

⁴<https://www.tsne.org/blog/process-evaluation-vs-outcome-evaluation>

⁵ *Stufflebeam, D.L; Madaus, C.F and Kellaghan, T. (eds.) 2000. Evaluation Models*. Kluwer Academic Publishers: Boston.

⁶<https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/analysis-roots-polio-vaccine-suspicion>;

<https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/2023-critical-year-polio-eradication-efforts-northern-nigeria>

cleared as many media outfits reported these claims without interrogating them plausibly due to limited capacity in fact-checking as at then. Consequently, while polio abated in other parts of the world, there has been a spike in Nigeria. Besides public health, information disorder has become a threat to the polity, inter-group relations, state-society relations and even personal sense of security and belonging in Nigeria.

So, arriving in 2016 in Nigeria, Africa Check birthed at a time that the consequences of information disorder were already imperilling not only public health but also Nigeria's democracy, peaceful co-existence and national security. The year of arrival of Africa Check in Nigeria, 2016 also coincided with when information disorder became recognised as a potent tool of strongmen and populist leaders across the world as well as conflict entrepreneurs. By then it had already been acknowledged that the technologies of the twenty-first century in the hands of strongmen leaders had become "new ways of communicating directly with the masses as well as social control."⁷ Outlaws and violent extremists have also found it convenient to deploy information disorder in its different forms to lure and radicalise people into violent extremism across the globe.

Therefore, after half a decade in Nigeria, Africa Check's expectations are to use the recommendations from this evaluation to achieve the following as enumerated below and in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU):

1. To build and maintain the institutional capacity of Africa Check's Nigeria office and selected media partners to fact-check claims made in public debate in Nigeria about health and development
2. To reduce the harm done by false and misleading claims on health and development topics made by policy makers, institutions, the media, and the public in Nigeria

⁷ Gideon Rachman. 2022. *The Age of the Strongman: How the Cult of the Leader Threatens Democracy around the World*. London: The Bodley Head. P. 3.

3. To increase knowledge and awareness of evidence-based health and development topics by policy makers, media, and relevant institutions.

1.3. Outline of the Report

In the section that follows, disinformation, misinformation, mal-information, and fake news are given broad and lucid explanations. This is followed by a detailed account of the methodology from the point of commissioning through to the conclusion of the fieldwork. This is followed by a presentation and analyses of the responses. Next comes the recommendations and followed by the conclusions.

1.4. Methodology of evaluation

1.4.1. (Pre)Data Generation

After signing the MOU, a review of relevant secondary sources was done and based on the objectives of the MoU, a single instrument for generating qualitative and quantitative responses from stakeholders was developed and reviewed before deployment. The respondents were purposively selected public health and development experts who have benefited from initiatives of the Africa Check or collaborated with the organization since it debuted in Nigeria in 2017. Also, print, radio and television journalists, officials of the Nigeria Center for Disease Control (NCDC), and the Federal Ministry of Health. Pre-arranged meetings were held with the respondents in Ibadan, Lagos and Abuja, Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory (FCT) from April to July 2023. In some instances, the respondents opted for a virtual interaction and such interviews were held virtually after which the interviews were transcribed.

1.4.2. Study Population and Survey Instrument

Out of the twenty-eight (28) intended respondents, twenty-five (25) representing 89.3% were eventually interacted with. The main limitation was the non-availability of three (3) representing 10.7% out of the intended respondents. The instrument designed, reviewed, and approved was used as the survey instrument while the interviews were recorded using the principal investigators mobile phone.

1.4.3. Data Analysis

The recorded interviews were transcribed manually after which the MAXQDA software was used to quantify the qualitative data for visualization. This was done by importing the transcribed interview for each respondent into the MAXQDA coding environment, wherein a code was created for each question with a corresponding code created for each matching response. Thereafter, the sub-code statistics feature on the MAXQDA was used to convert responses to quantifiable/scalable pie-charts and bar-charts explained in percentages and frequencies. Furthermore, the smart coding tool of MAXQDA was used to extract questions that elicited peculiar responses into tables against the name of each respondent for easy ascription.

1.4.4. Interpretation of Data

Analyzed data from the generic and peculiar responses were interpreted towards meeting the objectives of the MOU which deserve reiteration because of their centrality to the evaluation. Therefore, the interpretation teased out instructive conclusions and recommendations that would enable:

- ✓ Building and maintaining the institutional capacity of Africa Check's Nigeria office and selected media partners to fact-check claims made in public debate in Nigeria about health and development.
- ✓ Reducing the harm done by false and misleading claims on health and development topics made by policy makers, institutions, the media, and the public in Nigeria.
- ✓ Increasing the knowledge and awareness of evidence-based health and development topics by policy makers, media, and relevant institutions.

1.4.5. Analysis of stakeholders (Respondents)

Based on the list received from the Africa Check office in Nigeria, the stakeholders in this evaluation are strategically located within Nigeria's ecosystem of information generation, management and dissemination as professionals/practitioners and administrators. They also occupy strategic positions in communicating risks, interpreting threats, and building public confidence around issues that are central to public health, state-society relations, democracy and electoral integrity, inter-group relations, peaceful co-existence, and national security. They are therefore critical

stakeholders within the information management eco-system and national security in both normal and unusual times.

Amongst the criteria for selection to participate in the evaluation were that they are individuals who have been trained in fact-checking by Africa Check or whose organizations have ongoing partnership with Africa Check. Also, renowned experts like Professor Oyewale Tomori and Dr. Lawal Bakare, whose years of experience and stellar contributions aided the delivery of the programmes sponsored by Africa Check were part of the respondents.

The journalists in this study comprised two categories. Amongst the broadcast journalists were the programme presenters/anchors and the producers who sometimes also presented/anchored the programmes which were sponsored by Africa Check or where Africa Check featured as guests. The print journalists were columnists who had health columns in their newspapers. The officers of the Nigerian Center for Disease Control (NCDC) were responsible for the dissemination of public health information. Questions were posed towards knowing the respondent's profile and that of their organization, when and how they got to know about Africa Check, their experiences, expectations, and reservations (See Annex I).

1.4.6. Limitations of the evaluation

There were challenges that constituted constraints while conducting the evaluation. The first was the difficulty of getting mutually convenient dates for the interview with respondents. This was surmounted by opting for virtual interviews with some respondents and in some instances, visits were repeated to the state. Also, most of the interviews could only take place after May 29, 2023, because many of the respondents were actively involved in covering events around the transition process at both the federal and state levels. There were other instances where the initial contacts were not able to respond because they were not presenters/anchors of the Africa Check programs in their stations. However, in such instances, they referred the

investigator to the right person(s). In all, none of the challenges stopped the interactions with the respondents except for those who were not available at all.

2.1.1. Information disorder: A threat to Public Health and the Polity

Generically, information disorder is anything done to corrupt or pervert the wholesomeness or integrity of any piece of information. The threat posed by information disorder has been exacerbated by social media with attendant threats to the sustainability of a healthy free marketplace of ideas needed for democracy, peace, and national security. As observed by Lejla Turcilo and Mladen Obrenovic⁸, “Disinformation, misinformation, and mal-information pollute the information space worldwide and the trend of manipulating facts continues to disrupt public communication and, consequently, democratic processes in societies.”

Information disorder has also been added to the repertoire of insurgents, conflict entrepreneurs and other outlaws. Described as information operations (IO), strategic information operations (SIO) or information warfare (IW), the intention is to manipulate public opinion and change how the audience perceives the world by deliberately “altering the information environment and it is now a global phenomenon with political, social, psychological, educational, and cybersecurity dimensions.”⁹ Social media companies have recognised the menace that information operations when used strategically can pose as a form of information disorder. For instance, the Facebook describes information operation as “organised communicative activities that attempt to circulate problematically inaccurate or deceptive information on their platforms.”¹⁰ The manipulative use of information qualifies as a strategy if seen from the stance of Jurgen Habermas’s theory of communicative rationality¹¹ which

⁸ Lejla Turcilo and Mladen Obrenovic. 2020. *A Companion to Democracy #3 Misinformation, Disinformation, Malinformation: Causes, Trends, and Their Influence on Democracy*. https://www.boell.de/sites/default/files/2020-08/200825_E-Paper3_ENG.pdf Retrieved on July 6, 2023

⁹ Chris Eden et al

¹⁰ Jen Weedon, William Nuland and Alex Stamos. 2017. *Information Operations and Facebook*. (Apr. 2017) Retrieved July 15, 2023 from <https://fbnewsroomus.files.wordpress.com/2017/04/facebook-and-information-operations-v1.pdf>

¹¹ Jürgen Habermas. 1984. *The theory of communicative action*, Vol. 2. Beacon press, Boston, MA.

separates communicative activities that are aimed at conveying understanding from those that are aimed at manipulating others.

Some factors have been put forwards as responsible for the proliferation of information disorder. According to Julie Posetti¹² the Digital Age which has also been dubbed as the “golden era of journalism” has been accompanied with consequential changes which have inadvertently created enabling atmosphere for information disorder. Some of these include the depletion of newsroom budgets and available personnel to perform gate-keeping roles. The wane in quality control processes comes amidst increased pressure to meet deadlines, demands for home pages and social media channels. Time and resources for fact-checking, balancing and sub-editing are now shorter thereby causing over-dependence for revenue from native advertising and click-bait headlines that further reduces the trust of the public.¹³ Furthermore, algorithmic curation and increasing scale of anonymity in online accounts have contributed to the growing menace of information disorder.¹⁴ Consequently, information disorder imperils critical and accountability journalism because it breeds the erosion of public trust, makes critical journalism susceptible to crackdown and malicious targeting.

Although not securitized the way the war on terrorism has been designated, Nigeria has had a prolonged battle against information disorder especially misinformation and disinformation¹⁵ since the arrival of Africa Check in the country. Based on observations, misinformation or unintended false information have been found to be most prevalent during health pandemics. This was widespread during the

¹² Julie Posetti. 2017. *Protecting Journalism Sources in the Digital Age* UNESCO, Paris. p 104 <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000248054>. Retrieved on 01/7/2023.

¹³ Julie Posetti. 2018. News industry transformation: digital technology, social platforms and the spread of misinformation and disinformation

¹⁴ John Akers Gagan Bansal Gabriel Cadamuro Christine Chen Quanze Chen Lucy Lin Phoebe Mulcaire Rajalakshmi Nandakumar Matthew Rockett Lucy Simko John Toman Tongshuang Wu Eric Zeng Bill Zorn. 2018. Technology-Enabled Disinformation: Summary, Lessons, and Recommendations. *Technical Report UW-CSE-2018-12-02* <https://arxiv.org/pdf/1812.09383.pdf>

¹⁵ Center for Democracy & Development (CDD). 2020. *Health Misinformation: False stories from Ebola to Coronavirus*.

Ebola crisis in Nigeria, and the COVID-19 pandemic. This was exacerbated by the exponential rise in the number of subscribers to the internet and active social media users¹⁶ before two public health crises.

Worthy of note is the rising number of social media users in understanding the spread of misinformation and disinformation. According to DataReportal there were 122.5 million active internet users in Nigeria in January 2023 with a penetration rate that stood at “55.4 percent of the total population at the start of 2023 and 31.60 million social media users in January 2023, equating to 14.3 percent of the total population.”¹⁷

The increase in the number of social media users in Nigeria has accentuated the multiple risks from information disorder. This is because instead of citizens to be more informed because of increased access to the social media as multiple sources of information, they have become more confused while the fault-lines of ethnicity and religion have become thickened owing to the weaponization of the social media and its contents.¹⁸ In the next section a contextualisation of the main forms of information disorder is presented starting with fake news, disinformation, mal-information and misinformation.

2.1.2. Fake News

The emergence of fake news can be traced to the appearance of the first newspapers. At its emergence, the editors ensured that the readers were informed that such news items were not true and not intended to cause any harm. Overtime a drift away from the main principle of truth that defined journalism saw those who exaggerated information like politicians and businesspeople hiding behind the veil of purported harmlessness of fake news as a means of getting advantage and making profits.

¹⁶ Idayat Hassan. 2023. *ONLINE OPERATIONS: Nigeria's 2023 social media election campaign. Research Report*. Abuja: Center for Democracy & Development

¹⁷ <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2023/04/05/nigeria-and-the-global-internet-index>

¹⁸ *Post-Election Assessment of Conflict Management Mechanisms in Nigeria, 2019 and Beyond*. Switzerland: Center for Humanitarian Dialogue report

Fake news entered state craft and war diplomacy during World War I when the UK, the USA and subsequently Germany came to terms with the need to complement kinetic efforts with the manipulation of fake news used as propaganda. This is because it enabled them to simultaneously manipulate both the citizenry and combatants. As observed by Claire Wardle and Hossein Derakhshan¹⁹, one of the limitations of the phrase “fake news” is its inherent vulnerability because it is deployable as a weapon against critical media that demand accountability by people in power who found them uncompromising or reporting what they do not like. At this juncture, for clarity and identification, fake news needs to be separated from satire. Towards this, the criteria set by Wardle and Derakhshan²⁰ are instructive and these are focussing on the intentions of the “creator, producer and distributing agents.”

Indeed, Nigeria has not been immune from the devastating consequences of fake news. Against the backdrop of the threat posed by fake news to health of Nigeria’s democracy²¹, public health, peaceful co-existence, and national security, fact-checking becomes compelling as a response and safeguard that must be put in place. It is in this light that the efforts of Africa Check are strategic, pro-people and prodemocracy. This is because fact-checking inoculates the citizenry against fake news and other forms of information disorder especially on the new media by enhancing the citizens’ *critical ability* as explained by Taylor Buckner.²² Being *critical* or having a *critical ability* implies being able to distinguish truth from falsehood by using fact-checking techniques.

¹⁹ Claire Wardle and Hossein Derakhshan. 2018. MODULE 2: Thinking about ‘information disorder’: formats of misinformation, disinformation, and mal-information. *Journalism, ‘Fake News’ & Disinformation*.

https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/journalism_fake_news_disinformation_print_friendly_0.pdf
Retrieved on August 2, 2023

²⁰ Claire Wardle & Hossein Derakhshan. 2017. Information disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policy making. Council of Europe

²¹ Festus Prosper Olise. 2021. Users’ Perception of Fake News Proliferation on New Media Platforms and Threats to National Security in South-South, Nigeria.

²² Taylor H. Bukner. (1965). A theory of Rumor transmission. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 29(1), 54–70. *The Nigerian Journal of Communication (TNJC)*, 18(1 and 2): 195-208

2.1.3. Disinformation

Etymologically, the word is derived from the Russian word *dezinformatsiya* and historically it has its roots in Soviet intelligence operations. As a form of information disorder, disinformation poses the most lethal threat to liberal democracy. This is because as opined by Ladislav Bittman, it “kills the possibility of debate and a reality-based politics.”²³ Amongst the tactics used are crowding of conversational spaces on social media platforms with messages that could be positive or negative just to achieve their purpose of misdirecting which has been ascribed to the *xuanchuan*, that is linked to the Fifty-Cent Army in China.²⁴ Disinformation was an offensive instrument of the Soviet Union used for pursuing geopolitical ambitions by distorting the information landscape to influence people’s perception.²⁵

Disinformation continues to generate interest across disciplines because of its broad and far-reaching implications. The European Union defines it as “false, inaccurate or misleading information designed, presented and promoted to intentionally cause public harm or for profit.”²⁶ According to Professor Eric Cheyfitz, disinformation is the deliberate and systematic removal of history which results in shrinking of critical thinking, or a “constant unlearning of the facts.”²⁷ This is dangerous at the individual and group level given that critical thinking benefits immensely from history. In this sense, disinformation mitigates the “conscious processing of information, creating a structure where contradictions are not recognised.”²⁸ This view resonates with the definition and description of

²³ Ladislav Bittman. 1985. *The KGB and Soviet Disinformation: An Insider’s View*. Pergamon-Brassey’s, Washington, DC.

²⁴ Rongbin Han. (2015). Manufacturing consent in cyberspace: China’s ‘fifty-cent army’. *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 44, 2 (2015). 105-134.

²⁵ David K. Shipler. 1986. After they defect... (December 1986). Retrieved April 3, 2019 from <https://www.nytimes.com/1986/12/07/magazine/after-they-defect.html>

²⁶ <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/final-report-high-level-expert-group-fake-news-and-online-disinformation>

²⁷ Slavoj Žižek, *Trouble in Paradise: From the End of History to the End of Capitalism*, Melville House, Brooklyn, NY, 2014.

²⁸ Eric Cheyfitz, *The disinformation age: the collapse of liberal democracy in the USA*, Taylor&Francis Group, 2017.

disinformation as something that “contaminates public discourse,”²⁹ with the intention of causing harm. The keywords in diagnosing disinformation are lies, exaggerations, and half-truths. It is also instructive not to take propaganda for disinformation even though disinformation can be used for propaganda. A dividing line would be the clarification provided by Steve Neale who posits that propaganda is more overt and manipulative than disinformation because it is driven by emotional rather than informational messaging.³⁰

Going by the preceding, many contemporary societies are susceptible to disinformation especially in places with fractured fault-lines that can be exploited. Other factors that predispose societies to the dangers of disinformation are the following:

Information overload: distorted public perceptions produced by online algorithms built for viral advertising and user engagement; the complex iteration of fast technology development, globalisation, and post-colonialism, which have rapidly changed the rules-based international order.”³¹

Disinformation strategies and practices have evolved from hack and dump, cyber-attacks and randomly sharing conspiracy or made-up stories, into a more complex ecosystem where narratives are used to feed people with emotionally charged true and false information, that are easily weaponized. The impact of data-driven disinformation and vulnerability of populations to it was evident in the 2016 United States (U.S) presidential election that underscored the threat posed by disinformation

²⁹ Claire Wardle and Hossein Derakhshan. 2017. Information Disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policymaking,

³⁰ Steve Neale. 1977. Propaganda. *Screen*, (18)3: 9–40

³¹ Massimo Flore; Alexandra Balahur; Aldo Podavini and Marco Verile. 2019. *Understanding Citizens’ Vulnerabilities to Disinformation and Data-Driven Propaganda Case Study: The 2018 Italian General Election Luxembourg*: Publications Office of the European Union. P.8

to the integrity of elections. This attests to the strategic use that disinformation can be put to by local and even external actors.

That Nigeria is at-risk of disinformation is obvious given the hybridity of its democracy and fragility of its inter-group relations. The former makes its political actors without scruples in instrumentalizing disinformation for electoral gains while the latter is weaponized by conflict entrepreneurs to remain relevant within their communities. This was pronounced during the 2023 elections as attested to by all the respondents who averred that training provided by Africa Check came handy in empowering them to resist, debunk and emplace safeguards against raging machines of disinformation.

2.1.4. Misinformation

The sharing of misinformation is driven by socio-psychological factors. Online, people perform their identities. They want to feel connected to their “tribe”, whether that means members of the same political party, parents that don’t vaccinate their children, activists who are concerned about climate change, or those who belong to a certain religion, race, or ethnic groups.³²

One of the manifestations of information disorder is misinformation. One of the distinguishing features is that it is a false information without an intent to cause harm and as mentioned in the excerpt above, it is often used to create solidarity, connection and mobilisation of identities. Nicole Cooke³³ explains that misinformation and disinformation can be understood as two sides of the same coin; because misinformation is inaccurate, uncertain, vague and ambiguous in contrast to

³² Claire Wardle. 2019. *Understanding Information Disorder*. https://firstdraftnews.org/wpcontent/uploads/2019/10/Information_Disorder_Digital_AW.pdf. Retrieved on August 3, 2023.

³³ Nicole Cooke. 2017. Post-Truth, Truthiness, and Alternative Facts: Information Behavior and Critical Information Consumption for a New Age. *Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy* 87(3), 211–221.

disinformation that is a deliberate and conscious spread of false information. In the analysis of Vincent Hendricks and Mads Vestergaard³⁴,

If the misinformation is to have effect, it should not too easily reveal its fraudulence. Misinformation must seem reliable in order to effectively mislead people. Misinformation is therefore often a mixture of something allegedly true; something doubtful, twisted, and undocumented; and downright false information.

Intent has been used as the dividing line between misinformation and disinformation. Although they both depict misleading information, misinformation is presented as having no intent to mislead unlike disinformation that implies discernible deception. For instance, inexactness in photo captions, dates, statistics, translation, or when satire is given serious attention.³⁵ So, misinformation can easily be promoted and shared without knowing that it is false.

Although intent can be hard to prove, it does not make misinformation less harmful as a manifestation of information disorder. This is particularly so in countries with volatile inter-group relations and low level of media/information literacy like Nigeria. Therefore, Africa Check's efforts in this direction provides a safeguard against the potential threats to Nigeria's public health and the polity.

2.1.5. Mal-Information

Mal-information is a piece of information based on reality but used to inflict pain.³⁶ Based on this, mal-information requires intent, and a target or a predetermined victim. This leads to "a repurposing of the truth value of information for deceptive ends."³⁷ The unauthorized exposure of data, records, details, and personal information

³⁴ Vincent Hendricks and Mads Vestergaard. 2019. *Reality Lost*. Cham: Springer Open

³⁵ Beata Martin-Rozumiłowicz and Rasťo Kužel. 2019. Social Media, Disinformation and Electoral Integrity: *IFES Working Paper*. © 2019 International Foundation for Electoral Systems.

³⁶ Amy Schoenfeld Walker. 2019. Preparing Students for the Fight Against False Information With Visual Verification and Open Source Reporting. *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator*. 74(2): 227-239

³⁷ Darrin Baines and Robert Elliott. 2020. *Defining misinformation, disinformation and malinformation: An urgent need for clarity during the COVID-19 infodemic*.

that individuals would not be comfortable to have in the public space also falls into the category of mal-information especially when such is done to embarrass or tarnish the reputation of such individuals or groups.³⁸

From the preceding, leaks, hate speech and information shared to harass or intimidate would fall into the category of mal-information. Instances of hacking into personal emails or records to leak private communication to damage or repress a person or group fall into this category. This is often found in political contexts across the world. An often-cited instance was the hacking into emails from the Democratic National Committee and the Hilary Clinton campaign to leak details intended to damage the reputations of the two. Another common example was when Emmanuel Macron's emails were leaked on May 5, 2017, ahead of the run-off vote on May 7. Coming at few minutes before the official expiration of campaigns exposes it as an underhand tactic of electoral demarketing.³⁹

Mal-information poses a grievous threat to the sanctity and integrity of the public space because of its far-reaching consequences on the health of the public and the polity. As predicted by Idayat Hassan⁴⁰, the 2023 election saw the height of mal-information in Nigeria's Fourth Republic as the leading parties and candidates spared nothing in recruiting influencers and trolls for mal-information attacks and counterattacks. The weaponization of mal information especially during Nigeria's 2023 presidential elections had a heavy toll on inter-group relations that stressed the country's national unity. It is in this context that one can appreciate the efforts and safeguards put in place by Africa Check. This is because stakeholders and

<https://econpapers.repec.org/scripts/showcites.pf?h=repec:bir:birmec:20-06>. Retrieved on August 5, 2023

³⁸ Burbules, N. 1997. Struggling with the World Wide Web. *Campus Review*, [s. l.], v. 19: 20- 22

³⁹ Claire Wardle and Hossein Derakhshan. 2019. MODULE 2 Thinking about 'information disorder': formats of misinformation, disinformation, and mal-information https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/f_jfnd_handbook_module_2.pdf

⁴⁰ Idayat Hassan. 2023. *ONLINE OPERATIONS: Nigeria's 2023 social media election campaigns*. Abuja: Center for Democracy & Development

practitioners were well-equipped to counter and neutralise each item of mal-information put out during the period.

2.1.6. Fact-Checking

In a multi-country study conducted by Ethan Porter and Thomas Wood⁴¹ focusing on Argentina, Nigeria, South Africa, and the United Kingdom, it was established that information disorder is a threat in both normal and unusual times as well as in peace and war times. Event in the United States especially since 2016 have challenged the perception that only countries with fragile inter-group countries face potent risks of insecurity from information disorder. The infodemic that characterized the covid-19 pandemic has further shown that information disorder deserves more attention than it has received from stakeholders in the information management ecosystem. This is justifiable in the light of the progress and impact that newsrooms have been experiencing since they started partnering with fact-checking organizations in Nigeria. Raji Rasaki⁴² in a six-year mapping of the relationship between the two from 2015-2020, found that 77% of new reports within the period were fact-checked.

The emergence of fact-checking has been traced to the U.S in the 1990s when claims made in political advertisements aired on television had to be authenticated.⁴³ The unveiling of fact-checking projects like Snopes, fact-checking.org and PolitiFact including the global awareness of the notion of fake news in 2016 have been acknowledged as defining in creating global awareness for fact-checking.⁴⁴ Fact-

⁴¹ Ethan Porter and Thomas Wood. 2021. The global effectiveness of fact-checking: Evidence from simultaneous experiments in Argentina, Nigeria, South Africa, and the United Kingdom. *PNAS* 118(37): 1-7

⁴² Raji Rasaki. 2020. *A Six-year Mapping of Fact-Checks Shows Growing Partnership Between Newsrooms and Fact-Checking Organisations in Nigeria*. <https://dubawa.org/a-six-year-mapping-of-fact-checks-shows-growing-partnership-between-newsrooms-and-fact-checking-organisations-in-nigeria/> Retrieved on August 3, 2023

⁴³ Claire Wardle. 2019. *First Draft's Essential Guide to Understanding Information Disorder*. FirstDraft Retrieved from https://firstdraftnews.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Information_Disorder_Digital_AW.pdf?x76701Wardle August 2, 2023

⁴⁴ Folarin Jamiu. 2020. *Fact-checking Ecosystem: Media Organisations on the Frontline of Combating Information Disorder in Nigeria Part 1*. <https://dubawa.org/fact-checking-ecosystem-media-organisations-on-the-frontline-of-combating-information-disorder-in-nigeria-part-1/> Retrieved on August 2, 2023

checking has been seen as required whenever a claim contains facts, or figures are made that require objective verification.⁴⁵ As a recent development, it was observed that as of 2018 there existed no academic definition of fact-checking in the world except the dictionary definition which was considered incomplete because it placed fact-checking outside the purview of journalism.⁴⁶ Fact-checking has been contextually defined cognizant of information disorder as “the process of determining the truthfulness and accuracy of official, published information, such as politicians’ statements and news reports.”⁴⁷ An exception within the scope of what fact-checking entails is fact-checking common or popular narratives which are not factual. This is why debunking which verifies narratives is different from fact-checking.⁴⁸

A fact-checker is expected to have three main foci.⁴⁹ These are to be able to alter people’s minds by offering effective counterweight to misinformation, disinformation, or mal-information about any issue in a way that empowers them to challenge or test the false claims. The second one is to change the practice of journalism by empowering journalists to transcend mere reportage of news to become critical assessors of claims of politicians and state actors. The third expectation is that fact-checking should empower journalists to change the conversation and set the agenda from an informed perspective by exposing the deceptions, inaccuracies, and falsehood of state actors. This is expected to put pressure on political actors to desist from misleading the public.

Africa-Check in Nigeria has pursued the empowerment of journalists, and other critical stakeholders in the information management ecosystem to transcend mere reporters to become challengers of all forms of information disorder in the country. The contributions of Africa Check towards upscaling the competence of

⁴⁵ Ibid: Folarin Jamiu

⁴⁶ Ibid: Folarin Jamiu

⁴⁷ Ibid: Jamiu, 18

⁴⁸ Ibid: Jamiu 19

⁴⁹ Lucas Graves and Tom Glaisyer. 2012. *The Fact-Checking Universe in Spring 2012 An Overview*. Media Policy Initiative Research Paper © 2012 New America Foundation <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/71362008.pdf> Retrieved on August 4, 2023.

information gatekeepers in Nigeria since it debuted in 2017 which informed this evaluation would now be presented in the next section.

3.0. Presentation of Data

In this section, the data generated are presented and analysed using the outline of the research instrument. This begins with the respondents and organisational profile, their initial contact with Africa Check, when and why they chose to subscribe to have a relationship with Africa Check. Other questions were about why they share Africa Check contents if they have criteria for sharing and other questions posed to elicit their experience and impression of the Africa Check’s performance in Nigeria. Although the data generated were mainly qualitative through in-depth interviews, given the disparity of responses to the questions, they were quantified for graphic presentation and presented verbatim in some instances.

3.1.1. Respondents and Organisational Profile

The first question posed to respondents was to identify each organisation’s profile, focus and interest in fact-checking. The responses are presented below qualitatively to present the peculiar focus of each respondent and organisation. This was because of the need to be able to ensure a self-description and accurate representation in a disaggregated manner, the foci, and mandate of each organisation represented in the evaluation. Also, the position and contexts of using fact-checking competencies are presented.

Table 1: Respondents and Organisational Profile

Respondents’ Names	Responses
Abiodun Ogunniyi 18/05/2023, Abuja	I am an infection prevention and control expert at the NCDC
Abara Erin 17/05/2023, Abuja	So, my name is Abara Erin. Okay. So, I work with the NCDC, Risk Communication Unit as a scientific officer.
Joseph Njoku, 17/05/202, Abuja	I am a consultant and infodemic manager. I consult with these organizations based on ‘infodemic’ management. I have a background in Political Science. I went on to take public health trainings in infodemic management, as well as Covid- 19 advocacy and communications foundations with the WHO, the Vasin Alliance, UNICEF, as well as in John Hopkins University.

Prof Oyewale Tomori, 17/06/2023, Ibadan	Professor Oyewale Tomori, a globally renowned virologist and public health expert.
Ado Saiduwara 17/05/2023, Kano	My name is Ado Saiduwara. I am the station manager of <i>Freedom Radio, Kano</i> . It is the first independent station in the North.
Arase Kuale, 27/04/23, Lagos	I run a medical show at Correct FM on Sundays.
Jah'swill Stephen 27/04/2023, Lagos	I am the manager of Correct FM, Lagos.
Joshua Moses, 14/06/2023, Calabar	My name is Joshua Moses, I am Journalist, both cross print and broadcast media. I also work as the General Manager of the Station with a background in News Editing and Audio Editing. The station is <i>Sparkling and Super</i> , and it is located in the city of Calabar. And we've been operational now, for the past 5 years. May 12 was our 5th Anniversary. Our Mantra has been to service the people at their needs. Inform them the right way.
Lamir Sadiq 08/05/2023, Abuja	My name is Lamir Sadiq, Abuja Sadiq. I am currently the head of investigations at <i>Daily Trust Newspaper</i> .
Mohammed Rabiun Ali , 09/05/2023, Abuja	My name is Mohammed Rabiun Ali. I work with <i>Nigeria Television Authority</i> , here in Abuja Headquarters. What is your position or Rank? I am an Assistant Manager, News.
Ojoma Akor , 08/05/2023, Abuja	Miss Ojoma Akor, Health Editor, <i>Daily Trust</i> What again do you do in the organization, I mean your place in the organization? I also report health activities, and I edit, that is why I am a health editor.
Oluwaseun Ola, 23/04/2023 Ibadan, 23/04/2023 Ibadan	My name is Oluwaseun Ola. Our station is <i>Splash F.M Ibadan</i> . Well, we are into information dissemination, particularly development communication, that's our mandate.
Safiyah Bala Sambo, 12/05/2023, Sokoto	I Safiyah Bala Sambo, 12/05/2023, Sokoto Sambo, of <i>Vision Media Services F.M Station Sokoto</i> . I am a marker/presenter
Sodiq Ojorongbe, 07/05/2023 Lagos	My name is Sodiq Ojorongbe. I work at <i>Punch newspaper</i> . I work at the Health Desk. We have a specialized desk known as Punch Health wise. We basically write stories, that has to do with health, environment, climate change and all of that. That's what I do presently.
Timothy Bamidele, 05/12/2023, 05/12/2023	My name is Timothy Bamidele. I am the program manager, <i>Institute for Media and Society</i> and we are based in Lagos but worked before at Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria.
Tonye, 11/06/2023, Lagos	My name is Tonye. I am a Digital Investigation Journalist. That's the official term we use in AFP for fact checkers. Before I joined AFP, I was the Head of Digital Newsroom for the Guardian Newspaper. Okay, the AFP, what does it mean in full? AFP means <i>Agence France Presse</i> . It is a French News agency.
Tosin Ejalonibu, 28/04/2023, Lagos	Mr Tosin Ejalonibu What is the name of your organization? I work with <i>Radio Now 95.3 FM</i> . It is radio station based in Lagos state, Lagos Island to be precise. What is your position there? I am a producer there and we do

	public service journalism, mainly. Our core vision is public service journalism.
Samira Aisha Bello, 18/05/2023 Kano	Ok, I am a manager program working with <i>Freedom Radio, Kano</i> . What is the mandate of <i>Freedom Radio in Kano</i> ? We have been in Kano for 19 years now. By December we will be 20. We are the first private station and our reach is all over Kano and Katsina State. We have sister stations in Kano and another station in Kaduna.
Akorede Ogunbunmi, 26/04/2023, Lagos	I am the general manager of <i>Radio One 103.5 FM</i> , a partner of Africa Check for about four years now
Mayor Brown Isaac, 22/04/2023, Ibadan	My name is Mayor Isaac Brown, I'm the anchor of <i>Fresh FM Ibadan</i> situation room, which is a daily current affairs program, where we dwell mostly on breaking news, developing stories and events that are happening, as the program may be going on. We want to weigh in on it in real time. Occasionally we also have newsmakers, opinion molders and government officials on our show in the situation room.
Lanre Olagunju, 10/05/2023, Lagos	My name is Lanre Olagunju. I am presently the Fact Check Editor at <i>The Cable</i> . <i>The Cable</i> is an online news platform. One of the leading news platforms in the country. We also have a fact check arm in the organization, where we publish regular fact checks on politics, health, climate, entertainment, and other areas of value.
Ikechukwu Oyemeke, 28/04/2023 , 28/04/2023	So, basically, <i>Wazobia FM</i> was established because of the desire to share information with the populace. We are also consumers of broadcast content, especially radio. And the most commonly spoken language in Nigeria that cuts across boundaries, tribe and ethnicity, is 'Pidgin'
Tolulope Adeleru-Balogun, 12/06/2023	My name is Tolulope Adeleru Balogun, I'm head of programs for <i>News Central</i> . We are a Pan - African TV Station based in Lagos. I sit down on basically the in-house editorial works and then of course the external ones. But basically, programs – programming, how we create the contents we have, what goes on, scheduling of that content, airing of it, working directly with commercial or even outside partners in terms of content creation and sitting the contents on the platforms. So, basically the idea for News Central is to be able to tell Africa's true stories.
Dr. Bakare Lawal, Abuja, 11/06/2023	I was leading communications for Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and I was also acting in my capacity as the founder of EpidAlert, which is one of the good use of new media in health care.
Yecenu Sasetu, 12/05/2023, Abuja	My name is Yecena Sasetu of <i>Kiss F.M. Abuja</i> . I'm a journalist, reporter, producer, and presenter. I produce a health show; I also present a health program.

Source: 2023 Qualitative Evaluation of Africa Check in Nigeria

The table above presents a breakdown of the respondents and their respective organisation's focus, the respondents' role, and operational use of fact-checking. The mix shows the extent of Africa Check's reach in building relationships and capacities

of critical gatekeepers across Nigeria as well as its presence across the country. This is because some of the respondents revealed further that they have sister radio stations across the country that bear different names but to which they extend contents from Africa Check to, for enhancing the quality of their reports and debunking of reported falsehood. According to Mr. Jah'swill Stephen while responding to the question on the extent to which they share contents from Africa Check, he revealed that:

Primarily, the contract term was for radio. The exceptional difference is that in our own case of Correct FM we have six stations. There is one in Lagos and one in Ibadan covering the South-West. All are called Correct FM but operating on different frequencies. And because we have a central program schedule, it means that if it is running at 8 am in Lagos, it is running at 8 am in all other 5 locations. So, I just told you Lagos, Ibadan, Calabar and Enugu for the South and there is Kaduna and Kano for the North. So, that is the major advantage that Africa Check enjoys by the issue of this partnership.

Unlike what obtains with Correct F.M, the contents of Africa Check are not shared across the other stations of WAZOBIA F.M. in Abuja, Port Harcourt, Kano and Onitsha. In the words of Mr. Ikechukwu Oyemeke, 28/04/2023, 28/04/2023 Africa Check contents are “only aired on their Lagos frequency which according to accounts for 30-35% of radio listeners in Lagos.” The array and mix of the organisations and their profile as contained in the table above reveal that Africa Check is mindful of the assertion of Casandra López-Marcos and Pilar Vicente-Fernández⁵⁰ that “. . .fact-checking is a time-consuming, effortful, and difficult task that benefits from professional training and experience, fact-checkers aid the public by making veracity assessments more accessible.”

⁵⁰ Casandra López-Marcos and Pilar Vicente-Fernández. 2021. Fact Checkers Facing Fake News and Disinformation in the Digital Age: A Comparative Analysis between Spain and United Kingdom. *Publications*, (9)36: 1-16

3.1.2. Respondent's initial contact with Africa Check

For an organization that is less than ten years old in Nigeria and one that has registered a leading position in fact-checking, knowing how partners and beneficiaries got to know about its work was considered important to know how to improve its service to prospective beneficiaries and partners. The responses to the question are presented below according to how each person got to know and the percentage that they constitute overall.

Table 2: How did you first get to know about Africa Check

	Respondents	Percentage
Professional Network	17	68.00
Self-discovery	5	20.00
WhatsApp	1	4.00
Facebook	1	4.00
Website	1	4.00
Twitter	0	0.00
Instagram	0	0.00
Newspaper	0	0.00
Radio	0	0.00
Television	0	0.00
DOCUMENTS with code(s)	25	100.00
DOCUMENTS without code(s)	0	0.00
ANALYZED DOCUMENTS	25	100.00

Source: 2023 Qualitative Evaluation of Africa Check in Nigeria

How did you first get to know about Africa Check

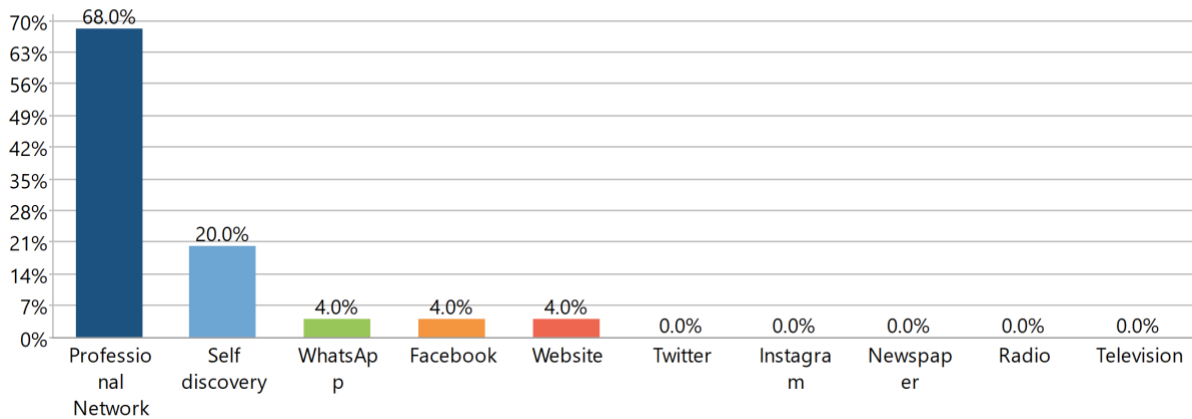


Figure 1: Source: 2023 Qualitative Evaluation of Africa Check in Nigeria

From table 2 and figure 1 above, 68% of the respondents got to know about Africa Check for the first time through people within their professional network, 20% discovered Africa Check on their own, and 4% through Facebook. The remaining 8% were through WhatsApp (4%) and Africa Check website (4%). Besides the 68% who first met Africa Check through verbal referral from members of their professional network, the rest can be described as having self-discovered Africa Check through the social media either by themselves while browsing or through posts from popular social media platforms (Facebook, and WhatsApp). That a significant percentage of the respondents got to know Africa Check through the social media validates the assertion of Jan Kietzmann et al who described the social media as “interactive platforms via which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss and modify user-generated content.”⁵¹ The composition of the actors in this universe further testifies to the presence and influence of those described as *Africtivistes* referring to “ a small yet active group of journalists and civil society activists ... who

⁵¹ Jan Kietzmann; Kristoffer Hermkens; Ian P. McCarthy and Bruno Silvestre. 2011. Social Media? Get Serious! Understanding the Functional Building Blocks of Social Media. *Business Horizons* 54(3): 241-251

use social media in their attempts to change the political landscape in West Africa.”⁵² Indeed, the coming of Africa Check to Nigeria provided a platform for capacity building for Nigerian *Africtivistes* to ensure the integrity of information disseminated in the public space and to ensure accountability.

3.1.3. When respondents chose to subscribe/partner to Africa Check in Nigeria?

Table 3 below presents data based on responses from all respondents revealing the years that they chose to subscribe or partner with Africa Check in Nigeria. From table 3, it is obvious that 16% joined in 2022, 4% in 2021, 28% joined in 2020, 24% in 2019, and 20% in 2018. There were 8% of the respondents who revealed that they had known about Africa Check since 2015 even before they got to Nigeria in 2016 officially.

Table 3: When did you choose to subscribe to Africa Check in Nigeria?

	Respondents	Percentage
2020	7	28.00
2019	6	24.00
2018	5	20.00
2022	4	16.00
2015	2	8.00
2021	1	4.00
DOCUMENTS with code(s)	25	100.00
DOCUMENTS without code(s)	0	0.00
ANALYZED DOCUMENTS	25	100.00

⁵² Emily Riley. 2019. Chaos and Comedy: Social Media, Activism and Democracy in Senegal. Maggie Dwyer and Thomas Molony (eds.), *Social Media and Politics in Africa: Democracy, Censorship and Security*. London: Zed Books. 129-151

When did you choose to subscribe to Africa Check in Nigeria

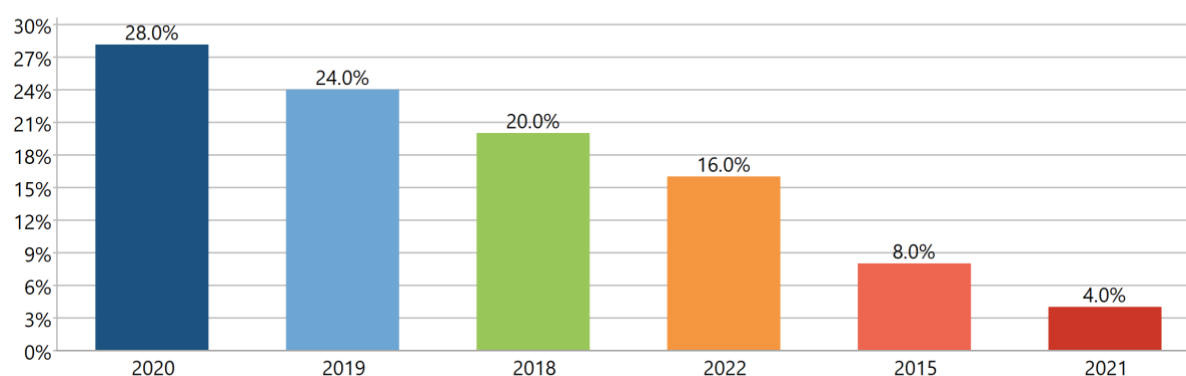


Figure 2: Source: 2023 Qualitative Evaluation of Africa Check in Nigeria

3.1.4. Why Respondents subscribed/partnered to/with Africa Check in Nigeria?

The reason and basis of conviction for each of the respondents to partner with or subscribe to Africa Check differed from one to the other. The responses provide a glimpse into yawning for capacity-building in fact-checking within the media and civil society universe in Nigeria. As contained in table 4 below, the peculiar reasons and rationale why each respondent subscribed/partnered with Africa Check. This has been deliberately presented qualitatively in order not to obstruct the expectations and justifications provided by each respondent.

Table 4: Why did you choose to subscribe/partner with Africa Check

Respondents' Names	Responses
Joseph Njoku, 17/05/202, Abuja	They were very well represented. And their Rep there did a great job in explaining certain things that Africa Check has done, they're currently doing, and even gave some hotline numbers that infodemic managers can view and make use of to get real time fact checked information.
Prof Oyewale Tomori, 17/06/2023, Ibadan	As a scientist, you need to check the fact. When you are doing your research, you have your theory, you have your hypothesis, then you run your experiment, to determine if it is true. We're all doing the same thing.
Mr. Jah'swill Stephen	Ordinarily, we are averse to partnership. We are a private organization; we have our overhead to run a company. We pay salaries, we pay tax and incidentally, this is Nigeria, business is not very easy. And this is Lagos you are practically providing everything yourself. You provide

	<p>your water; you provide your electricity and all of that. So, for this reason, on a private note, we decided that partnerships that does not involve the exchange of money, you know what, you can keep it there. Whatever we want to do as a way of contribution, you can go ahead and do that. However, because of the nature of this project (fact-checking), we decided to accept on a Minimum Pay Basis. When I use the language ‘minimum pay’ it is not anything when compared to what we have on our rates ordinarily. In fact, it is a far cry. If I recall, I think it’s \$500 that we agreed upon that we will be getting on a monthly basis for the purpose of having this partnership done.</p>
<p>Ado Saiduwara 17/05/2023, Kano</p>	<p>They told us what they do and we felt that we are interested in the fact checking issue, especially during Covid-19. The partnership was during the Covid-19 pandemic, when people are sending in fake information about Covid-19, it was then we started to partner with them.</p>
<p>Joshua Moses, 14/06/2023, Calabar</p>	<p>It was because during the elections, there were many claims flying around. Like ‘this person has been dropped from voting or this has happened’. We were also linking both what we were doing on radio and on social media. It was like a cross casting thing. So, as we use on radio, we also use in social media. We were encouraged to go and see the claims that were being debunked.</p>
<p>Lanre Olagunju, 10/05/2023, Lagos</p>	<p>When I got into the fact checking community, Africa Check was one of the leading names and platforms when it comes to fact checking in the continent. There is no way as a fact checker that you would miss the name.</p>
<p>Safiyah Bala Sambo, 12/05/2023, Sokoto</p>	<p>To enable me to have facts in my ongoing activities</p>
<p>Oluwaseun Ola, 23/04/2023 Ibadan</p>	<p>I think it was more like a memorandum of understanding to use Africa Check content, particularly the fact checking content on health-related issues for all of our program. So, I happen to be the anchor person for that program.</p>
<p>Tonye 11/06/2023, Lagos</p>	<p>To make sure that we protect the citizens from (fake news). And sometimes it is a matter of personal consumption too, like ‘oh this is not true, this is true’.</p>
<p>Samira Aisha Bello, 18/05/2023 Kano</p>	<p>It is important because, for the first time, we started using it for our health program, because then there is fake news that people have been trusting the fact about it and people are thinking it is true. And Africa Check warns such type of news as fake. And it is important for people to know that it’s not everything you should start using herbs as medicines for cancer or for everything.</p>
<p>Ikechukwu Oyemeke, 28/04/2023</p>	<p>They conducted it with the support of the American government. We (my station) had an agreement with them, and that agreement is for them to continue their advocacy and campaign against fake news misinformation and disinformation. When we got back to the station, my program manager called me and assigned me the responsibility to champion that course by making sure, on a weekly basis we deliver</p>

	contents on media literacy, explainers, as well as fact checks on disinformation. So, he gave me that responsibility.
Akorede Ogunbunmi, 26/04/2023, Lagos	It must be our editorial content. Radio One is a news and sports station. That must have been the reason why they struck a deal and we had an agreement. And they have programs with us, some on commercial and some on non-commercial basis.
Arase Kuale, 27/04/23, Lagos	Because, the same way you are so willing to bring out that information, it is the same way, it will put you on the wrong map, they will change it for you. and the disgrace. And your name won't be popular when you are putting on proper information, it is when you put the wrong one, your identity will be known. So, I invited him (Africa Check) to speak about fact checking information, and he actually corrected a lot of misconceptions, ideas and self-medication some people had made during the period of Covid-19. So, that was how I got involved and started sharing
Ojoma Akor , 08/05/2023, Abuja	I share because it helps enlighten the public about health in particular. I share because I know that most of their fact checks are 100% accurate. ****

Source: 2023 Qualitative Evaluation of Africa Check in Nigeria

3.1.5. Respondents and Frequency of (Re)Sharing of Africa Check Contents

A driving question for this section is; “why does information disorder thrive?” The two readily offered answers are that information disorder thrives mainly because of lack detection and limited (re)sharing or circulation of fact-checked claims. Therefore, Once fact-checks are carried out and published by valid sources, they need to be quickly disseminated over the internet to put out the wildfire of misinformation.”⁵³ This is why exploring the frequency of sharing fact-checked claims by the respondents was considered appropriate. According to table 5 and figure 4 below respectively, 56% of the respondents revealed that they always shared fact-checked contents from Africa Check, 28% of the respondents frequently shared, and 16% rarely shared. Whether it is retweets on Twitter, reposts on Facebook or forwarded messages on WhatsApp, detection of information disorder is as important as (re)sharing fact-checked contents in ensuring the integrity of information in the

⁵³ Jiexun Li1 and Xiaohui Chang. 2023. Combating Misinformation by Sharing the Truth: a Study on the Spread of Fact-Checks on Social Media. *Information Systems Frontiers*. 25:1479–1493

public space. This is why the follow-up question dwells on the frequency of (re)sharing fact-checked contents from by the respondents.

Table 5: How often do you share Africa Check contents?

	Respondents	Percentage
Always share	14	56.00
Frequently share	7	28.00
Rarely share	4	16.00
I don't share	0	0.00
DOCUMENTS with code(s)	25	100.00
DOCUMENTS without code(s)	0	0.00
ANALYZED DOCUMENTS	25	100.00

Source: 2023 Qualitative Evaluation of Africa Check in Nigeria

How often do you share Africa Check contents?

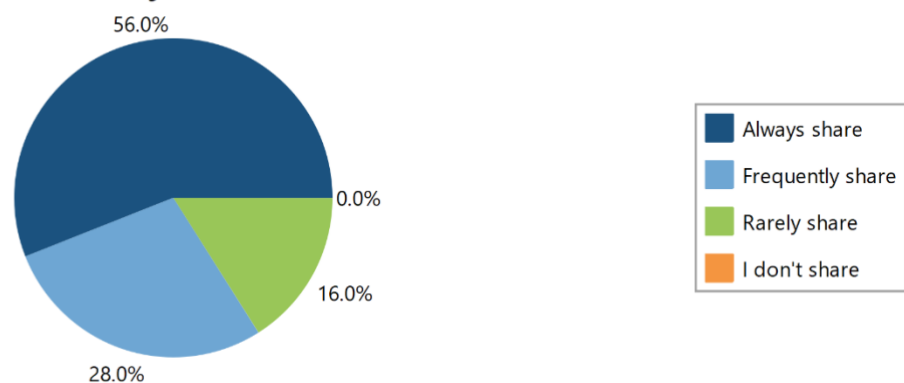


Figure 3: Source: 2023 Qualitative Evaluation of Africa Check in Nigeria

3.1.6. Respondents Preferred (Social)Media for (Re)sharing Africa Check contents.

The sharing behavior of citizens/netizens substantially determines the mileage of both compromised and fact-checked contents. This is why (re)sharing of fact-checked contents becomes imperative as a response and safeguard. So, as presented table 6 and figure 5 respectively below, 24% of the respondents (re)shared fact-checked contents on WhatsApp, 22% did on radio especially those with sister radio

stations, 16% (re)shared on twitter, 12% (re)shared on Facebook, 8% on their websites, 8% on Instagram, 6% within their professional networks and 4% rebroadcast on their television stations.

Table 6: How do you share?

	Respondents	Percentage
WhatsApp	12	24.00
Radio	11	22.00
Twitter	8	16.00
Facebook	6	12.00
Website	4	8.00
Instagram	4	8.00
Professional Network	3	6.00
Television	2	4.00
Others	0	0.00
Newspaper	0	0.00
DOCUMENTS with code(s)	25	100.00
DOCUMENTS without code(s)	0	0.00
ANALYZED RESPONSES	50	100.00

Source: 2023 Qualitative Evaluation of Africa Check in Nigeria

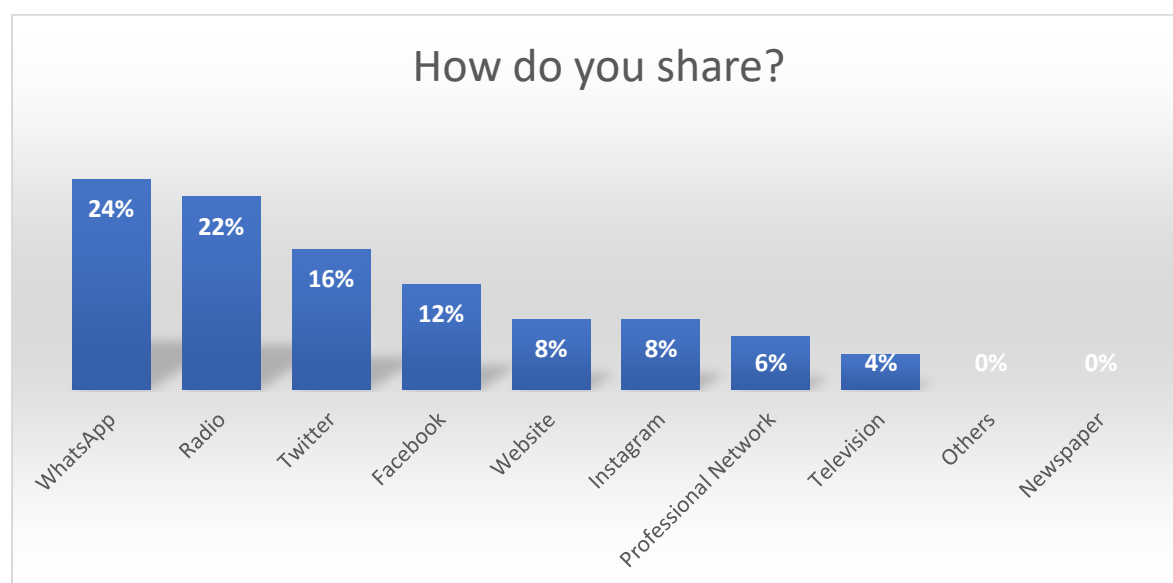


Figure 4: Source: 2023 Qualitative Evaluation of Africa Check in Nigeria

The main driver of information disorder is because sharing compromised contents especially on social media platforms is not matched or outdone by sharing of fact-checked contents. Compared to the Global North, citizens/netizens of the Global South have higher exposure to compromised contents. This is because of the citizens'/netizens' lower level of digital literacy, access to independent media and growing accessibility to social media platforms.⁵⁴ Information disorder shared through social media platforms have been found to be undermine information integrity. This enables a proper contextualization of Africa Check's interventions in training gate-keepers and critical stakeholders in the information highway as strategically inoculating them.

3.1.7. Why Respondents share Africa Check Contents

Sharing and resharing of are crucial to information disorder and information integrity in the public space. The responses which are presented qualitatively are to ensure that there is no restriction and to prevent ambiguity in getting textured feedback from all the respondents as captured in table 7 below.

Table 7: Why respondents share Africa Check contents.

Respondents' Names	Responses
Prof Oyewale Tomori, 17/06/2023, Ibadan	So, I think the truth will set us free, that's what the Bible says. Anybody who is telling a lie, is endangering people's life.
Akorede Ogunbunmi, 26/04/2023, Lagos	We believe that we live in a society where fake news is all around. They are a lot of fake news and people yearn for knowledge and they want to know the truth. More so, people want to know how not to misinform, be misinformed, and how not to be fed with fake news. And when you see checks based on empirical facts, that makes the program interesting to the audience
Joshua Moses, 14/06/2023, Calabar	We have a time slot dedicated to Africa Check and fact check every Friday. It is a 15 minutes radio program.

⁵⁴ Jeremy Bowles; Horacio Larreguy and Shelley Liu. (2020). Countering misinformation via WhatsApp: Preliminary evidence from the COVID-19 pandemic in Zimbabwe. *PLoS ONE* 15(10): 1-11

Yecenu Sasetu, 12/05/2023, Abujau	I trust them enough to see that any information from them is accurate. once I see information from there, I don't need to ask again really
Samira Aisha Bello, 18/05/2023 Kano	It is important because, for the first time, we started using it for our health program, because then there is fake news that people have been trusting the fact about it and people are thinking it is true.
Ado Saiduwara 17/05/2023, Kano	It is only for public health programs and news, where necessary
Lamir Sadiq	Because mostly you find that maybe they've done a fact check on something and the news spread falsely on different groups on WhatsApp. So, there is a counter on any fact check hub, to correct that misinformation.
Ikechukwu Oyemeke, 28/04/2023	Wazobia FM was established because of the desire to share information with the populace. We are also consumers of broadcast content
Jah'swill Stephen, 27/04/2023, Lagos	It is a weekly radio program, we are not prints, we are not social media. We are basically on radio
Mohammed Rabiun Ali , 09/05/2023, Abuja	No, not really. I only use their content on TV since I am a TV person. So, I only use it on TV
Arase Kuale, 27/04/23, Lagos	I invited him to speak about fact checking information, and he corrected a lot of misconceptions, ideas and self-medication some people had made during that period. So, that was how I got to know
Ojoma Akor , 08/05/2023, Abuja	I share because it helps enlighten the public about health in particular. I share because I know that most of their fact checks are 100% accurate.
Tonye Dr. Bakare Lawal, 11/06/2023, Lagos	Yes, social media. Primarily on social media / new media. Sometimes I also do distribution with other journalists, so that they can use it. These journalists can now be
Tolulope Adeleru-Balogun, 12/06/2023, Lagos	The idea for News Central is to be able to tell Africa's true stories. Stories that have moved beyond the narratives of poverty stricken, war torn, corruption issues. What we realize is that, yes, those are part of the story, but for too long, they have dominated and been like that is the only story of Africa. And like Chinmamanda said, "the dangers of a single story"

Source: 2023 Qualitative Evaluation of Africa Check in Nigeria

Re-sharing behaviour, manifesting as retweeting, re-posting, re-vining, or re-blogging, and reforwarding is perhaps the main tool of mechanisms of online information dissemination. This is enabled because social media platforms have inherent tools that enhance re-sharing behaviour. Therefore, for Africa Check having

insight into the rationale for each respondent’s decision and expectation from sharing was considered instructive.

3.1.8. Description of the audience that Respondents share Africa Check’s Contents with

Although the stakeholders in this study are complementary, each one has its primary audience it caters for. Each respondent is considered as best suited to describe its audience and the research design took this into consideration in making this section particularly qualitative as shown in table 8 below.

Table 8: Description of the audience that Respondents share Africa Contents with

Respondents’ Names	Responses
Dr. Tonye Bakare, 06/05/2023, Abuja	My primary audience is through EpidAlert.
Ikechukwu Oyemeke, 28/04/2023	Yes, target audience. And Wazobia FM commands about 30-40% of radio listenership in Lagos.
Lamir Sadiq	General public.
Lanre Olagunju, 10/05/2023, Lagos	Share with professional colleagues, and if it is of interest to the general public too.
Mohammed Rabiu Ali , 09/05/2023, Abuja	NTA has a very big and large audience.
Ojoma Akor , 08/05/2023, Abuja	Millions of readers in Nigeria, especially across the world.
Timothy Bamidele, 05/12/2023	We work with community radio, with campus radio, with public radio, with private radios.
Tolulope Adeleru- Balogun, 12/06/2023, Lagos	When we are thinking of audience, its general, because, in conversations we realise, whether you are young or old, as long as you are consuming anything on social media
Tosin Ejalonibu, 28/04/2023, Lagos	You know the core essence of radio is also simplicity, because it is radio, we try to break down the conversation to everyone.
Jas’will Stephen	For the radio business, it will be very wrong to say there is a generic audience. But there is always a target audience. But again, by virtue of the fact that we are dealing with Covid -19 here. All and all became interested in knowing, ok what do I need to know about Covid-19. There were a lot of misconceptions flying around.

Source: 2023 Qualitative Evaluation of Africa Check in Nigeria

3.1.9. Estimates and Description of the audience that Respondents share Africa

Check contents with

The primary audience of each organization represented by stakeholders who participated in this evaluation varies from one to another. This is why each respondent was allowed to describe and to name the estimated audience it (re)shares Africa Check contents with as presented in table 9 below.

Table 9: Estimates and Description of the Audience that Respondents share Africa Check contents with

Respondents	Responses
Ado Saiduwara 17/05/2023	Because most of our listeners are Hausa speakers.
Dr. Bakare Lawal	My primary audience is through EpidAlert.
Ikechukwu Oyemeke 28/04/2023	Yes, target audience. And Wazobia FM commands about 30-40% of radio listenership in Lagos.
Yecenu Sasetu, 12/05/2023, Abuja	I reach out to people that I know in the organization and ask. even on their social media platform like Twitter, they usually post verified information.
Lamir Sadiq, 08/05/2023, Abuja	General.
Lanre Olagunju, 10/05/2023, Lagos	I share with your professional colleagues, and if it is of interest to the general public, you share too? Exactly.
Mohammed Rabiun Ali, 09/05/2023, Abuja	NTA has a very big and large audience.
Ojoma Akor 08/05/2023, Sokoto	We have millions of readers in Nigeria, especially across the world.
Safiyah Bala Sambo, 12/05/2023, Sokoto	Both the rural and the urban settlers in either the adult or the young ones.
Timothy Bamidele, 05/12/2023	We work with community radio, with campus radio, with public radio, with private radios.
Tolulope Adeleru-Balogun, 12/06/2023, Lagos	When we are thinking of audience, its general, because, in conversations we realise, whether you are young or old, as long as you are consuming anything on social media
Tosin Ejalonibu, 28/04/2023	You know the core of radio is also simplicity, because it is radio, we try to break down the conversation to everyone.
Jah'swill Stephen, 27/04/2023, Lagos	For radio business, it will be very wrong to say there is a generic audience. But there is always a target audience. But again, by virtue of the fact that we are dealing with Covid -19 here. All and all became interested in knowing, ok what do I

	need to know about Covid-19. There were a lot of misconceptions flying around.
Joseph Njoku, 17/05/2022, Abuja	For Twitter, there is no specific audience. I like to describe twitter as a market place. Everybody, both people who are media focused as well as other area focused are also on twitter. So, I just retweet and it cut across everybody.
Sodiq Ojurongbe, 07/05/2023 Lagos	Yes. Just like I told you, I'm someone that has this kind of passion and love for fact checks. So, when I see people, there are a lot of platforms, especially on WhatsApp, that people just dish out information that are not true and all of that. So, there are times that you just have reasons to just come up, bring some of these check reports, to counter some of these claims, some of these misrepresentations that is out there.
Joshua Moses, 14/06/2023, Calabar	We have a time slot dedicated to Africa Check and fact check every Friday. It is a 15 minutes radio program. You know Africa Check comes up with a lot of claims, that they fact check. So, we amplify those things, because some of them, people amongst our audience may have heard it.
Abara Erin 17/05/2023, Abuja	Yes. Especially the content that resonates with us. Even in our social media platform. Most of the time, we do retweet.

Source: 2023 Qualitative Evaluation of Africa Check in Nigeria

From the figures given as estimates above and the plurality of the audience, it is evident that Africa Check's interventions are strategic in empowering critical stakeholders and by extension the Nigerian public in detecting and combating information disorder. However, for respondents who are not journalists, they (re)share mainly with members of their relatives and members of their professional networks.

3.1.10. The criteria used by respective respondents' for (Re)sharing Africa Check contents.

As crucial as sharing is to driving information disorder and promoting information integrity, users of fact-checked contents are still at liberty to determine if they want to share, why they want to share and with whom they want to share. In table 10 below, respondents provide insights into their criteria for sharing contents from Africa Check. Fifty-six percent (56%) (re)share because they consider it useful for those with whom they (re)share, 20% of the respondents (re)share based clear requests to verify

information, 12% (re)share with those who belong to their network, and 12% (re)share because of the need to fact check public health information.

Table 10: What are your criteria for (Re)Sharing with such audience.

	Respondents	Percentage
Because I consider it useful for them even if outside my network	14	56.00
Based on clear requests to verify information	5	20.00
Because they belong to my network	3	12.00
Need to fact-check public health information	3	12.00
Need to fact-check electoral/political development information	0	0.00
DOCUMENTS with code(s)	25	100.00
DOCUMENTS without code(s)	0	0.00
ANALYZED DOCUMENTS	25	100.00

Source: 2023 Qualitative Evaluation of Africa Check in Nigeria

What are your criteria for (Re)Sharing with such audience

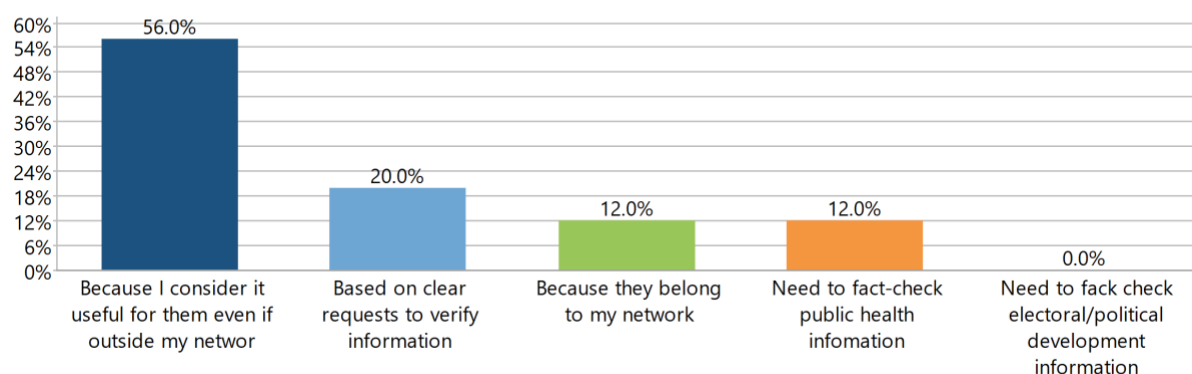


Figure 5: Source: 2023 Qualitative Evaluation of Africa Check in Nigeria

In the next section, responses, and analyses of specific contexts that stakeholders within the information ecosystem in Nigeria needed to be hands-on in conducting fact-checking would be presented. The two contexts of interests are periods of elections and the Covid-19 pandemic. Given that not all the respondents joined Africa

Check at the same time, responses were coded in two ways. Those whose responses indicated that they had enlisted with Africa Check during the elections were coded as *Yes* while to those such a question was not applicable had their responses coded as *No*. From interactions with all the respondents, most of them started using actively using the contents of Africa Check after the 2019 elections. So, the election in focus in this context would be the 2023 elections. This provides a balance between development and public fact-checking that formed the basis of knowing Africa Check for most of the respondents.

3.2.1. Africa Check contents during 2023 elections in Nigeria

In table 11 a summary that shows the frequency and percentages of those who used Africa Check’s content during the 2023 election is presented. This is followed by figure 7 providing only the summary in percentages. Table 12 presents the respondents’ recall of how the training received from Africa Check helped came handy against information disorder.

Table 11: Summary of Respondents Use of Africa Check Contents during the 2023 elections in Nigeria

	Respondent	Percentage
Yes	23	92.00
No	2	8.00
DOCUMENTS with code(s)	25	100.00
DOCUMENTS without code(s)	0	0.00
ANALYZED DOCUMENTS	25	100.00

Source: 2023 Qualitative Evaluation of Africa Check in Nigeria

Summary of Respondents Use of Africa Check Contents during the 2023 elections in Nigeria

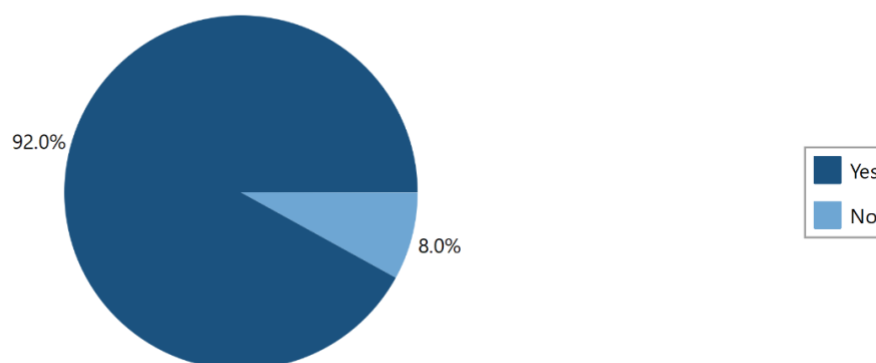


Figure 6: Source: 2023 Qualitative Evaluation of Africa Check in Nigeria

Table 12: Respondents' Feedback on how Africa Check contents helped against information disorder in Nigeria's 2023 Elections (Yes)

Respondents' Names	Responses
Prof Oyewale Tomori, 17/06/2023, Ibadan	We had all sorts. Having been used to checking my back, it only took a little bit of extra time to confirm. That some might be believed, but it got a point where virtually everything that came out, I had to check. And fake news would always come. People would always lie for whatever reason; they would do for their own benefit.
Samira Aisha Bello, 18/05/2023 Kano	It's one content about Tinubu, where he said, he was very sick and can't contest. We got the fact and it's not it. We use it in one of our political programs. It is just after the primary election. There is one about Obi, I can't remember exactly the content, but we used it.
Akorede Ogunbunmi, 26/04/2023, Lagos	Yes, I think I remember one. Let me give you an instance. There was a material sent in by an editor with Africa check. A claim that Peter Obi, the Presidential Candidate of the Labour Party has withdrawn from the race and asked his supporters to vote for Atiku Abubakar of the People Democratic Party.
Dr. Bakare Lawal, 11/06/2023, Lagos	The one I saw in this 2023 election, one of the voice note that Atiku was having – I'm trying to remember the exact news item. The first time I say it, I just sent it to my contact in Africa Check, that please, this item needs to be fact checked and disseminated quickly. And I can see that that happened. If it was them that did it, or someone else, what I just know is that, it went in and it became known to everyone that this was not true. So, everybody knew that it was fake news in a very short period of time.

Yecenu Sasetu, 12/05/2023, Abuja	There was something that Peter Obi said about a figure he gave and they were able to verify that that information was not true.
Jah'swill Stephen, 27/04/2023, Lagos	Yes. It is very obvious. A news is fake when it is totally untrue. When it never happened. It is very easy to manipulate people stories like that on social media. It breaks. Take for instance, an election was held in Ghana in 1993, as far back as 1993 and there was some element of violence. A syndicate can decide to pull that picture and just place 2023 on it and indicate that this happened in Abule here in Lagos. And before long, it goes viral. Social media just blows it out of proportion. (especially WhatsApp). Some people are in a group to just be the first to share. That was made very clear in that training - 'Do not be quick to share.' And then there were also mechanisms that I cannot remember
Joshua Moses, 14/06/2023, Calabar	I know there was one surrounding Peter Obi. I know that there was one they said Peter Obi did something.
Mohammed Rabi Ali , 09/05/2023, Abuja	Definitely, particularly in 2015, I covered Kano North senatorial district. And there was inconclusive in the gubernatorial election. So, I was asked to cover Bichi Local Government Area. Had it not been for fact checking, I would have misled so many people. The whole Nation actually. Of course, because NTA is a (wide station). I was there and information was going around that APC didn't allow PDP to vote. And I came live, I interviewed both the party members of the APC and PDP, and they responded. Without having this kind of knowledge and being so critical on fact checking, with the information I have, I would have just said yeah or I will just also follow my colleagues and say yes, they are not allowing PDP members to vote.
Safiyah Bala Sambo, 12/05/2023, Sokoto	In March 2020 where twitter users reported that Abba Kyari did not die of corona virus.
Sodiq Ojorongbe, 07/05/2023 Lagos	I remember there was a particular thing where an old video. I can't recall the actual video. I know there was a video where it was being circulated, that people were rigging. How a particular set of people sat down somewhere and were thumbprinting the ballot paper. So, I remember that particular video, and it came out to be false analysis and all of that, and we discovered that that video was actually false. So, I remember that particular incident.
Tolulope Adeleru-Balogun, 12/06/2023, Lagos	There were rumours that Professor Yakubu (INEC Chairman) that his son had 'gone mad'. While we debunked that, we also used it as an opportunity to talk about why people should not share rumours about people's mental health and that could lead to mental health issues. So, it's a lot and some of it tends to be interwoven together. I know for us we've done whether Tinubu was the 16th actual President of Nigeria or not, we've

	done some fact checking on some of the claims about Obi as well aided by Africa Check contents.
Tony, 11/06/2023, Lagos	I've already joined AFP. I remember they did something that I found very interesting. Trends in election disinformation in Nigeria. I'm sure it's still on their website. They catalogue different forms that disinformation would come in elections. And I read even as professional fact checker, I read and I found it interesting.
Tosin Ejalonibu, 28/04/2023, Lagos	I think during the governorship election in Lagos. We are a radio station based in Lagos and Lagos was a hotspot. So, we got a call from one of our callers, because we had a special election coverage. So, we got a call from one of our callers saying that in his area, *Pospsi North and Gun Palace Wheel* – not his polling unit, he heard that they are telling people not to vote. He talked about seeing the video. We went online and it was Africa Check that fact checked it that the video is an old video, not a new one.
Ado Saiduwara 17/05/2023, Kano	Of course, yes. There are some fake information that we have gotten during elections. There are some information that were supposed to be from INEC directly but we get it from elsewhere. People are talking anyhow because of political sentiment. So, the information we get from Africa Check help us to find the correct information, so as to inform our listeners, so that they won't be misinformed and they will not be taken by political sentiments.
Arase Kuale, 27/04/23, Lagos	This election (2023) was very special, people turned to journalists, and everybody became an electoral officer. So, It took a lot of patience, and mindfulness of trainings received from Africa Check on steps to be taken to verify received contents before using them. One of it is that we must always insist that the person sending us the video should be presents physically at the scene of shooting/recording the videos. So, my knowledge of these tools of fact-checking helped me to control the eagerness of being the first to share especially during elections.

Source: 2023 Qualitative Evaluation of Africa Check in Nigeria

That information disorder can be weaponized to subvert democracy and the integrity of elections has become doubtless since 2016 going by the outcome of the elections in the U.S. Therefore, if information disorder could affect established democracies, then the threat of information disorder on *electoral hybrid, semi* or

*anocracies*⁵⁵ like many of Africa's at a time that democracy itself is globally embattled⁵⁶ cannot be overstated. This helps to foreground the import of fact-checking for unfettered participation of citizens, accountability of leaders, and the integrity of elections in Nigeria. So, Africa Check in Nigeria ensured the scaling up of the capacity of its partners and journalists before, during and after the 2023 elections in being alive to its awareness and commitment to ensuring that information disorder does not subtract from the quality of citizens' participation in the electoral process as well as ensuring accountability of leaders in the electoral space. This confirms the one of the points made by the European Union on 2023 elections that online and offline media forces in concert with the civil society and fact-checkers safeguarded the integrity of the information environment through "Real-time fact checking of gubernatorial and other contestants' debates to hold candidates accountable, . . ."⁵⁷

3.2.2. Africa Check contents and fact checking during COVID-19

The impact of Covid-19 reminds anyone of the words of Lenin that "There are decades when nothing happens, and then there are weeks when decades happen." In Nigeria the pandemic was accompanied with an infodemic. That immediately required journalists and actors within the information ecosystem to be able to effectively guard the integrity and accuracy of everything that was coming into the public space in the face of the existential threat that the world was confronting.

Given that most of the respondents who found themselves at the frontline with the need to prebunk and debunk in the war of infodemic that accompanied the pandemic, responses from them on whether they used contents from Africa Check during the pandemic are presented below in table 13. Seventy-two percent of the

⁵⁵ Wale Adebani. 2023. Introduction. *Democracy and Nigeria's Fourth Republic Governance, Political Economy, and Party Politics 1999–2023*. London: James Currey. 1-32

P. 7: "A semi-democracy, or anocracy as it is often called, is a form of government that mixes democratic and autocratic attributes."

⁵⁶ Marc, F. Platner. 2020. Democracy Embattled. *Journal of Democracy*, 31(1): 5-10

⁵⁷ European Union Election Observation Mission NIGERIA 2023 Final Report. <https://www.eas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2023/EU%20EOM%20NGA%202023%20FR.pdf> Retrieved on August 1, 2023

respondents answered in the affirmative that they used the contents from Africa Check during the unusual time while 28% answered in the contrary, the responses are provided in figure 7 and the qualitative responses are presented in table 13.

Table 13: Africa Check contents and fact checking during COVID-19

	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	18	72.00
No	7	28.00
DOCUMENTS with code(s)	25	100.00
DOCUMENTS without code(s)	0	0.00
ANALYZED DOCUMENTS	25	100.00

Africa Check contents and fact-checking during COVID-19

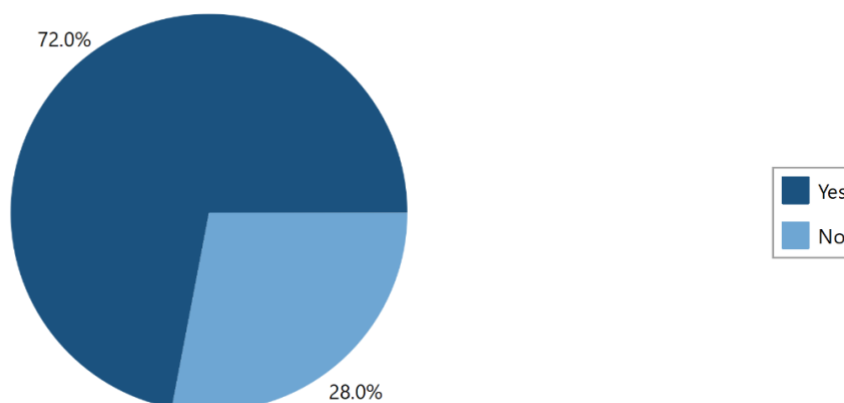


Figure 7: Source: 2023 Qualitative Evaluation of Africa Check in Nigeria

Table 14: How Africa Check contents helped against information disorder during COVID-19

Respondents' Names	Responses
Abara Erin 17/05/2023, Abuja	So, it's like when you want to find out, is this thing true or not? It's to look for what Africa check has done.
Joseph Njoku	At some point particularly the COVID-19. There were so many rumours, actually not just one. So, one of the most popular one was about taking Chloroquine, to cure Covid-19. So, I think around that time, Africa Check released an information around that clarifying

	<p>that it was a wrong information. I used that to engage in conversations both online and offline to help people who didn't have core knowledge of public health to understand that rumours like this, not just this, ought not to be and should not be found disseminated. As it would constantly put fear on both online and offline populations.</p>
<p>Prof Oyewale Tomori, 17/06/2023, Ibadan</p>	<p>People were carrying all of rumours, like the chloroquine treatment, and everything. So, its difficult to point one, so many stories going on. I mean, you know what the story was? Religion was part of it, 5G was a particular one, and one with a pastor spewed his own theory. At some point the National Center for Disease Control (NCDC) came up with fact-checked information to debunk all those claims.</p>
<p>Ado Saiduwara 17/05/2023, Kano</p>	<p>Rayiwa de Corona. That is 'living with corona virus' or 'living during corona pandemic'. It was a one-hour program which we got report across Nigeria. We also have our own local news here in Kano and of course Presidential Task Force, we got our reports also from there. Then, Africa Check's contributions helped us a lot, especially when people are promoting local solution and cures to Covid-19. So, that information we got from Africa check helped us to correct most of this information.</p>
<p>Samira Aisha Bello, 18/05/2023 Kano</p>	<p>Yes, there was one about Coriander leaf but the training from Africa Check helped to know what to and how to educate the public about it that we had to bring in a dietician at some point because it was becoming a popular opinion not based on scientific evidence.</p>
<p>Yecenu Sasetu, 12/05/2023, Abujau</p>	<p>For the Covid-19 also, especially with the vaccine. People talking about it and there is so much information out there and you don't know what is true or not, what is accurate or not, what is partially true or not. So, Africa Check contents and training were really helpful. Because I trust them enough, so, when I see information, they put out on social media, I totally trust it to say, 'ok, yes, this has been verified, this is accurate, or this is partial or not.</p>
<p>Jah'swill Stephen, 27/04/2023, Lagos</p>	<p>Yes. I just gave you one clear example of the story around the vaccine. That came to us directly. So, even before Africa Check sent us information, we had written them. Onafori Araese came to me and said "Oga look at this story about this whole thing making the round." And I said, No. if you are not sure, send the information to Africa Check. Let them confirm or say that this is not truth. They needed a few days to do this and they responded. And that formed one of our contents.</p>
<p>Lanre Olagunju, 10/05/2023, Lagos</p>	<p>So, there is this particular report. At that point in time, I and some other fact checkers also founded a fact checking platform called 'Check Naija'. And we come to try to debunk many facts check with respect to Covid-19, Africa Check was that leading platform. Especially when it comes to things like tangerine can kill covid, hot water and salt... Africa Check had a lot of that. So, yes, during Covid, Africa Check was very helpful.</p>

Safiyah Bala Sambo, 12/05/2023, Sokoto	In 2022 where a state politician stated that Covid19 is not a natural disease it is technologically developed in the laboratory, it was a biological weapon that is resulted from 5G technology. But with contents from Africa Check we were about to debunk all such
Sodiq Ojuronbe, 07/05/2023 Lagos	People can just come up today that 50 people died in a particular country because of vaccination. And a lot of reports were done by Africa Check just to make us know the true state of things. And I can say that it was really helpful during that period.
Tolulope Adeleru-Balogun, 12/06/2023, Lagos	There was one we did on killer biscuits that they said was coming from South Africa to Nigeria. So, the topics are not dominated by just politics. Yes, it can be public health issues, it can be other issues. I know we did that for South Africa recently as well. This last one was on president Ruto meeting with some journalist and stating some of the things he had made as claims that his government has done in the short time, that he has been the president. We've also taken on public health issues, the killer biscuits, something about Covid-19 as well. So, Africa Check contents across different times have been helpful
Tosin Ejalonibu, 28/04/2023, Lagos	I remember that there was this talk about Covid-19. I could remember then Africa Check fact checked it about a talk that Covid - 19 was like a fever. And people could just do some leaves and some herbs. They talked about some herbs that people could do and once they drink it, they will be fine. And even influencers were sharing the same information.
Timothy Bamidele, 05/12/2023	So, Africa Check is one of the fact checkers, that we look at what they have of done. We have a lot of programs then that ran on air. And one interesting lesson that I like that time, our traffic on Facebook "wake up", it was interesting. So, then I can see that when people are at home, they turn to social media for information.
Dr. Bakare Lawal, 11/06/2023, Lagos	I remember one of the articles, one of the fact-check they did about a particular Nigerian doctor or is it Cameroon doctor, in the years who claimed that Chloroquine could actually cure Covid. So, we published that and it actually went viral on our Twitter handle.
Ojoma Akor , 08/05/2023, Abuja	In fact, early last year I did a report on "Covid-19: How Facebook contributes to vaccine hesitancy among Young Nigerians." There was a lot of misinformation on Facebook during that period.

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The fact-checked contents of Africa Check proved to be live savers during the Covid-19 pandemic as Africa Check provided a meeting point that enabled both experts and media contents providers to work in synergy to preserve the integrity of public health information akin to a Multi-National Force on the frontline. A case in point was alluded to during my interactions with Professor Oyewale Tomori on how he had to

even speak in pidgin on some shows to ensure that the message was well conveyed to the public. One cannot imagine the amount of mis-information, mal-information, dis-information, and fake news that would have thrived and caused avoidable during this period. The inestimable number of lives that would have lost to information disorder during the pandemic helps to underscore the strategic impact of Africa Check Nigeria while the pandemic lasted.

3.3.3 Measuring expectations and impact

It is not unexpected that the respondents would have suggestions on areas where they think the Africa Check can do better just as they would have areas where they had their expectations met and unsurpassed. Towards having tailored and specific responses specifically on the two contexts in which respondents have had to deploy the skills acquired from Africa Check and to rely on its contents to respond formidably, the following sections have been into two with each on the elections in table 15 and public health information respectively in table 16.

3.3.4. Strengthening safeguards to combat information disorder during electioneering.

As actors on the frontline, it was considered appropriate to ensure that their views as practitioners on how to combat information disorder during elections should be unencumbered. This informed the elicitation of responses on the question and presentation of same qualitatively in table 15 below. However, only two of the respondents saw the need for more to be done as presented in the table below while others felt Africa Check’s performance in combating information disorder during electioneering as seen in 2023 was sufficient.

Table 15: Strengthening safeguards to combat information disorder during electioneering.

Respondents’ Names	Responses
Dr. Bakare Lawal, 11/06/2023, Lagos	How do we desensitize politicians from weaponizing information? How do we draw a policy? Because politicians back in the day, probably there used to be a lot of election violence, in this election there

was violence but not as bad as probably recorded. And that's because, politicians have been made to realise that electoral violence is a waste of everybody's time and resources. Now, we have not been sensitized against developing misinformation as a weapon of winning elections. You can see in this election that people went out to develop materials that were evidently fake. Now, we have not been sensitized against developing misinformation as a weapon of winning elections. You can see in this election that people went out to develop materials that were evidently fake. They were using all of the deep fake technologies to reproduce people's voices, people edited pictures and videos to interpret what people didn't mean. How much work we can do? Because we have to tackle things at source. It is going to be through the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), it is going to be use of some advance technologies. So that we are faster. Or we do things that don't scale, by building a network or outsource managers and verifiers. That as the information is probably hitting digital media for the first time, there is like a Shazam that speaks that 'look, this is the first time this is coming up, so, take, verify'. And when they verify, they are able to issue another digital asset, that wherever that thing goes, it just carries that this is fake on top of it.

Ikechukwu Oyemeke,
28/04/2023

In the area of electioneering, we discovered that the way misinformation and fake news were used, exposed me to understand that we have a long way to go. In terms of civil engagements, engagement with the people, advocacy, educating them and informing them on the right information. Like catching them with the right information before the wrong one comes.

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The views and suggestions of those who identified specific areas to focus on towards the future and emplacing safeguards against information disorder have been presented. Although majority of the respondents were satisfied with the overall training, support, and collaborations that Africa Check provided in preparing them to combat information disorder during the 2023 elections.

3.3.5. Strengthening safeguards to combat information disorder during public health emergencies.

While not wishing for the next pandemic, it was considered thoughtful to generate responses on how the public health communication and information management can benefit from effective fact-checking. The responses are presented in table 16.

Table 16: Strengthening safeguards to combat information disorder during public health emergencies

Respondents' Names	Responses
Joseph Njoku, 17/05/2022, Abuja	First of all, I'd like to mention that they are doing a great work across all fields of public health, they are doing great. However, in all the fields, something that is lacking is rapid response. I've noticed that they are not quick in terms of responding or debunking messages that are sent to them directly to fact check, so that the health professionals in the field will leverage on their own insights to keep spreading the right information.
Dr. Bakare Lawal, 11/06/2023, Lagos	There is a need to also pay attention to issues that can affect public health like road infrastructure for instance.
Safiyah Bala Sambo, 12/05/2023, Sokoto	Health Education and Communication

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Although the pandemic was unprecedented in contemporary world history, it highlighted the fact that information integrity must be prioritised in both normal and unusual times.

3.3.6. How Africa Check has met respondents expectations and enhanced overall competence.

Since it commenced operations in Nigeria, the Covid-19 pandemic's infodemic and the 2023 elections have been the two major contexts for partners and trainees of Africa Check to make use of their trainings and to assess how well they have been upscaled to combat information disorder in Nigeria. However, Africa Check would benefit from learning directly from respondent on how its training has enhanced their overall competence as presented in table 17.

3.3.6. How Africa Check has met respondents expectations and enhanced respondents overall competence.

Table 17: How Africa Check has met respondents' expectations and enhanced respondents overall competence.

Respondents' Names	Responses
Abara Erin 17/05/2023, Abuja	Yes

Joseph Njoku, 17/05/202, Abuja	Okay first would be the mention I made with regards to increasing rapid response mechanisms and being more present online.
Prof Oyewale Tomori, 17/06/2023, Ibadan ,	They've done a great job. I'm quite impressed with them. That's the reason why. On WhatsApp, I get their contents maybe once a week or once in two weeks.
Ado Saiduwara 17/05/2023, Kano	Yes. Because we try to even tell them that we want to expand the partnership to our other states. Like Kaduna, Dutse, Abuja is coming up and our other stations in Kano.
Samira Aisha Bello, 18/05/2023 Kano	Yes, it has been met expectations in so many areas.
Akorede Ogunbunmi, 26/04/2023, Lagos	Yes, they are being met tremendously. The major one that we had was, when we looked at the mutual benefits, we were thinking that they will bring contents that will enrich our content and then they will train our staff. In both areas we have benefitted tremendously. In terms of training, I myself have been a beneficiary of their training at some point and a number of our staff. Then in terms of content enrichment, wow, it has been superb.
Dr. Bakare Lawal, 11/06/2023, Lagos	Yes.
Ikechukwu Oyemeke, 28/04/2023	If there is any possibility of scoring Africa Check 101 over 100, I will.
Yecenu Sasetu, 12/05/2023, Abujau	So, I think that's basically the expectation for me that what they put out should be accurate. That they know their job, that they know what they are doing. And so far, yes. At least I haven't seen any other platform or any other person coming to say 'No this information that they put out was actually true or not'.
Joshua Moses, 14/06/2023, Calabar	Yes,
Lamir Sadiq	Yes. I didn't really know about fact check till that time. It opened my eyes to new possibilities. As at the time that most of the disinformation we are having was not as much as we are getting now. And so far, I will say that, Africa Check opened my eyes to the possibility to be able to understand there are people who are there to churn out disinformation and misinformation and what I do to quickly tackle this.
Lanre Olagunju, 10/05/2023, Lagos	Some of the expectations for me is the fact that the fact checks at Africa Check do not only bother on Nigeria only. And as a fact checker who is also a member of that community and also looking at how other Africa Nations are also fairing against disinformation. Africa Check is that major platform that actually does that.

Mohammed Rabiun Ali , 09/05/2023, Abuja	Like I told you earlier, since that time, I have been using their tools in terms of reporting elections. Not only elections, even if you have any piece of anything that should be fact-checked there are tools that they gave us that you can use to know whether that evidence is true or fake. So, I have those documents with me, and whenever I come across this kind of thing, I resort back to the document (tools).
Ojoma Akor , 08/05/2023, Abuja	Yes, they have been met. In fact, among other fact checking organizations and mechanisms, I tend to put Africa Check above them.
Oluwaseun Ola, 23/04/2023 Ibadan	It's been a great one. On a scale of 1 -10, I'll say eight (8).
Safiyah Bala Sambo, 12/05/2023, Sokoto	It has indeed helped me a lot in terms of my field of practice which enables me to get a facts and appropriate news in my writing and postings.
Tony Lawal, 11/06/2023, Lagos	Yes, largely.
Tosin Ejalonibu, 28/04/2023, Lagos	Yes, I think they have tried well. I think they have done well. They have trained a lot of journalists in fact checking in this country. They have also helped newsrooms set up their own fact checking desk, which I think is good. They've sponsored TV programs. There is one on News Central TV, I think is called 'Check' and goes on I think 8 pm every Friday. I will say they've done well.
Arase Kuale, 27/04/23, Lagos	Yes.
Jah'swill Stephen, 27/04/2023, Lagos	Yes of course
Tolulope Adeleru-Balogun, 12/06/2023, Lagos	Yes
Abiodun Ogunniyi 18/05/2023, Abuja	Yes
Timothy Bamidele, 05/12/2023	Yes
Mayor Isaac Brown	Yes
Sodiq Ojurongbe, 07/05/2023 Lagos	Yes.

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Without a doubt, all the respondents were unequivocal in acknowledging that Africa Check has substantially enhanced their professional competence, especially in the area of fact-checking. In the next section, they offer suggestions on what they think the organization should do to shore up its capacity building and generally supportive roles in the media space.

3.4.1. What Africa Check needs to do more to enhance fact-checking in Nigeria?

The respondents many of whom have worked across different cultures and places in Nigeria bare their minds on what they think the Africa Check should do more of in enhancing fact-checking in Nigeria as presented below in table 18. This is followed by table 19 where they also opined on what the organization should do less of.

Table 18: What Africa Check needs to do more to enhance fact-checking in Nigeria.

Respondents' Names	Responses
Prof Oyewale Tomori, 17/06/2023, Ibadan	I said, expand to other areas not just public health. Fact check is only dealing with people who are digitally literate. While neglecting the majority of the people who are not.
Ado Saiduwara 17/05/2023, Kano	So, we like them to give us more as regards information coming from rural areas. That is where we have active people, this is where have low attendants are working. So, we will like Africa Check to give out a lot of information on how we are going to go about improving the health care delivery system in rural areas. We would like them to open up information to people in the rural area. This is where we have a lot of issues. More of the people that are not educated are living in rural areas. More of complicated health issues and the statistics are there. So, we will like Africa Check to start collecting information from rural areas. We would like Africa Check to prepare adequate reports on health issues, so that we can draw the attention of government on those issues where we want them to come in. Also, it is our wish that we can have them speak officially on the issue of good governance generally because we would want the partnership to cover these areas.
Samira Aisha Bello, 18/05/2023 Kano	Training is very good, especially for journalist. You know these health personnel is more than Facebook and YouTube and people need to be part of it. There is a lot of quietness. Sometimes you need to do virtual meetings, maybe after each quarter to see 'what we are doing and review.
Akorede Ogunbunmi, 26/04/2023, Lagos	I think they respond to public emergencies, that is why we have health more that time. And during elections too, they came up with political materials more. But the sponsorship from their side was not as robust as that of health.
Arase Kuale, 27/04/23, Lagos	I think they should increase put more effort and to expand. Going further to expand the conversations in smaller states, like community radios to focus on issues in Nigerian communities.
Dr. Bakare Lawal, 11/06/2023, Lagos ,	So, the use of technology needs to be embedded in the core of the work that Africa Check is doing. I know that they are beginning to apply technology. This is the age of software, we are even moving past software now, moving

	<p>into Artificial Intelligence and if you know the way deep fakes work now, you can see the pope putting on a Balenciaga and it's not true, and you can see people arresting Donald Trump, and it's not true. Artificial intelligence is capable of doing that. Africa Check's business, is not even human being that are crafty enough in terms of capacity development to develop real crafts to develop those things</p>
<p>Tonye, 11/06/2023, Lagos</p>	<p>Africa Check needs to play a little more role in advocacy and engaging lawmakers. No, this is for institutional legislation now, where we are developing laws that can control our interaction as a society. Because our laws need to be faster.. So, I think Africa Check needs to develop a legislative interaction system and agenda, that also appraises even laws, from time to time.</p>
<p>Ikechukwu Oyemeke, 28/04/2023</p>	<p>And having been exposed to certain weaknesses regarding our ethnic and religious interests, we can begin to build that unit, bonding and tolerance through certain programs that will create awareness and correctly inform and educate. So, being a Muslim is not a reason for you to be against someone who is a Christian and being a Christian is not a reason for you to be against someone who is a Muslim. Whoever is caught up in your space of religion does not pose a threat to you. So, tolerating differences will go a long way to help people when these mischief-makers come with their antics.</p>
<p>Yecenu Sasetu, 12/05/2023, Abujau</p>	<p>Recently, I have not been seeing updates from them on WhatsApp. Before now, I used to get broadcast messages that they sent out, but somehow, they stopped. For about a year now, I have not gotten any. Maybe they should also collaborate with media organizations more. To find a way to infiltrate and partner with as many media organizations. Permit me to mention this. There is something BBC Media Action does, where they partner with practically every radio station. It is basically on radio.</p>
<p>Joshua Moses, 14/06/2023, Calabar</p>	<p>I think localizing it and having local journalist. Because one thing about fact check is that the claim should resonate with listeners. For instance, we give 15 minutes, I don't think 15 minutes is enough. We are not even able to take live feedback from callers. Before the person will finish analysing for people to say 'this your claim, I no understand am, I understand am', time will have elapsed. We also have a situation where, somebody made a claim another part of Nigeria, it may not resonate with people in this part of Nigeria.</p>
<p>Joshua Moses, 14/06/2023, Calabar</p>	<p>Generally, so far, I think they are doing great. I think so far, they are good, except maybe we adapt on their campaigns. Most of their campaigns, the ones we ran, you know this is an Efik speaking, mixture community and pidgin are here too. If you can adapt some of the campaigns to open languages like PSAs. We can take them on some of the Ejakas, some of the Nupe Languages basically. Just to make it adapt to local languages.</p>
<p>Lamir Sadiq</p>	<p>I think if we are to look at security matters, there is a lot of tension and disinformation around it, especially on social media. You find that there are a lot of certain things happening, that creates a lot of tension and that creates a lot of scare that has not happened yet. For instance, in a state like Plateau state, some of those things they are used to happening, you find that someone goes on social media to say this thing is happening, meanwhile it</p>

	has not really happened yet. So, if there is going to be a project, at least to tackle especially security matters.
Lanre Olagunju, 10/05/2023, Lagos	So, I think that they need to increase their publicity in all of the African Countries in which they are established.
Mohammed Rabiu Ali , 09/05/2023, Abuja	Training and retraining, it is very vital, especially for journalists. When you train a journalist on an issue, you have not only trained him/her because it would in turn benefit the society.
Ojoma Akor , 08/05/2023, Abuja	If the wherewithal is there, they should go all spheres. They should not be limited.
Oluwaseun Ola, 23/04/2023 Ibadan	I guess they could involve in training local journalists to give them wider coverage and partnership. So, if for instance they come to Oyo state and pick maybe few radio stations, train some journalists or student journalists who are in campuses. Train them in the art of fact checking and then create a community of fact checkers amongst these students. They can help see what is happening in their local environment which will inform the contents that will be broadcast.
Safiyah Bala Sambo, 12/05/2023, Sokoto	Should improve its skillful level of educating and trainings of participants.
Sodiq Ojuronbe, 07/05/2023 Lagos	I know they have Nigeria editors, but I feel there's a need to do more. Because, Nigeria is a very big country, and in terms of social media, there are a lot of people, a lot of subscribers. And Nigerians, they are the forefront of dishing out fake information. So, I feel they just need to have more people on ground to do that work. I feel they need more people. I'm not sure of that because we were working directly with them in South Africa at that time. So, I'm not sure if they have up to ten (10) staff in Nigeria. So, they need to expand
Timothy Bamidele, 05/12/2023	What I am thinking is that we should be able to have more collaborative activities. Although, from our own side, we believe that, we work with them, and be more of their resource persons. And maybe in the future when we have some other complaints, we should be able to speak to them as mentors for some of these broadcast people we are training and mentor them until they are able to stand on their feet. And you know that will have some sort of obligation. We are thinking towards that.
Tolulope Adeleru-Balogun, 12/06/2023, Lagos	With us in particular, an improvement can come with giving not just the contents, but also links to the experts so that we can as well ask them some questions. I think that would add context the concerns of our own immediate communities
Tolulope Adeleru-Balogun, 12/06/2023, Lagos	I think that's about it, per se. One feedback I will give back is that, because this is TV, more of the people we talk to from Africa Check side, need a bit more TV awareness. Because, you have to deliver punchy, you have to deliver interesting, you have to keep the audience caught on. I just need a bit more of that from them. It's almost like public speaking, it's not a training you are giving, but public speaking. So, I need more of a public speaking presentation from them.

Tonye 11/06/2023, Lagos	Pre-bunking is, instead of waiting to tell people to say, this is false, you prepare them. Pre-bunking is, you quicken them that, if you see this sort of information, this is how you cross check. So that you know whether it is false or true. So that's pre-bunking. It's like training. Increasing capacity of people to understand what is false and what is true.
Tosin Ejalonibu, 28/04/2023, Lagos	Yes. It is very essential because we saw a lot of them. I think there should be a way to bring down fact-checking, just like we bring down journalism. There should be a way to bring it down to members in the rural communities. Yes, it is good we have started having factchecking programs in various media platforms, I think we should start having indigenous also.
Samira Aisha Bello, 18/05/2023 Kano	I think what they should do more is to give another awareness on how to find if a story is true or not. Because we can't post any story to debunk it, we have to explain to people and give them awareness. When you (can) find stories that are fake by yourself, I think that is the most important things they will have to put more effort in making.

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Table 19: What Africa Check needs to do less to enhance fact-checking in Nigeria

Respondents' Names	Responses
Dr. Bakare Lawal, 11/06/2023, Lagos	In terms of what they should do less, I would argue that maybe Africa Check should do less of direct to consumer. By this, I mean they should do more with the newsroom and less of directly reaching the public. This would also help the newsrooms to be more innovative in delivering their contents to the public
Yecenu Sasetu, 12/05/2023, Abujau	Less? I don't think there is anything they should do less of. Because information is growing. So much is growing and doing less of that now will be like you're bringing down the momentum. So, I don't think there is anything that they should do less of right now.
Joshua Moses, 14/06/2023, Calabar	I don't think they should do less of anything because what they are fighting is not deteriorating.
Lamir Sadiq	Less of? Why should they do anything less? If they do something on the health matters... We have a lot of challenges in Nigeria, we have a lot of sectors that need concentration and interventions. But the truth is that, it depends on what is the trending thing at the moment.
Lanre Olagunju, 10/05/2023, Lagos	Oh, I really don't think that... Well, if you have a pandemic, what do you really want to do less of?
Mohammed Rabiou Ali , 09/05/2023, Abuja	I don't have anything negative with Africa Check.
Ojoma Akor , 08/05/2023, Abuja	I can't think of any.
Oluwaseun Ola, 23/04/2023 Ibadan	We should do less of foreign fact checking materials. We should do less of those foreign, particularly some of those health posts that are probably not done in Nigeria or relatable with by Nigerians

Safiyah Bala Sambo, 12/05/2023, Sokoto	The roles are unquestionable and no need for them stop.
Sodiq Ojurongbe, 07/05/2023 Lagos	I can't say. Because there is a lot of work to be done.
Tonye, 11/06/2023, Lagos	I wouldn't say they should do less of anything. As far as I'm concerned, if they can get more funding to do more of the stuff they are doing now, probably include more of politics, I think it's fine. Because, let me explain a little bit. There is economic angle to disinformation that a lot of us do not even get. Because, one person can sit in a room with N500 data, create a Facebook account and start sharing fake news. So, the threat from information disorder is cheap but the devastation can be irreparable.

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None of the respondents thought Africa Check should do less of anything that has been done in Nigeria so far. Rather many of them even increased what they desire that Africa Check does more in addition to what they earlier stated. We probed further to find out from the respondents if they felt Africa Check should expand its scope of interests in the country and the responses are presented in the next section.

3.4.2. Should Africa Check expand to cover other areas of public interest?

Many of the respondents held the view that Africa Check focuses only on public health education and fact-checking. However, this question provided a context for them to identify areas where they think the organisation should do more as presented in table 20, figure 8 and table 21.

Table 20: Should Africa Check expand to cover other areas of public interest?

	Respondent	Percentage
Yes	23	92.00
No	2	8.00
DOCUMENTS with code(s)	25	100.00
DOCUMENTS without code(s)	0	0.00
ANALYZED DOCUMENTS	25	100.00

Should Africa Check expand to cover other areas of public interest?

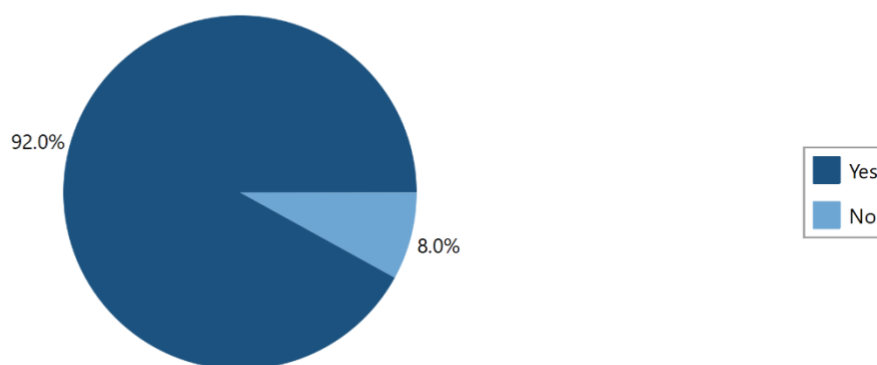


Figure 8: 2023 Qualitative Evaluation of Africa Check in Nigeria

Table 21: Should Africa Check expand to cover other areas of public interest?

Respondents' Names	Responses
Abiodun Ogunniyi 18/05/2023, Abuja	Absolutely
Joseph Njoku, 17/05/202, Abuja	I will say adapting it. So, if that can be improved on, then of course it can be ready to be deployed across not just civic and peace education. It could be deployed across other sectors, because the challenge of information disorder or basically disinformation and misinformation, cuts across all sectors. Like you mentioned, education, it cuts across other sectors. Yes, it can be adapted, then deployed.
Prof Oyewale Tomori, 17/06/2023, Ibadan	Definitely. The news from outside of health is even more dangerous. During the currency redesign era, there were all sorts of stories.
Akorede Ogunbunmi, 26/04/2023, Lagos	More like civic. Yes, more like civic responsibility, and participation in governance. They can do that not necessarily during elections. To promote inclusive governance and civic participation.
Arase Kuale, 27/04/23, Lagos	they can attempt to do it. But I feel like they might have to have more resources because they switch regions to cater for the peculiarity and urgencies in each area. It has to be tailored to communities.
Tonye , 11/06/2023, Lagos	Because of that I would say, strategically, yes, we need a response. When you get to the tactical side of it, there might be need for modified approach. Because, the behaviour of the

	<p>key source of power in the ecosystem of public health is different from the source of power in political setting. In that context, if you use the direct tactics you used in public health, the political space might even create a bigger problem for you. At the strategic level, yes but tactically we need to appraise what will work. We can pick experiences</p>
<p>Ikechukwu Oyemeke, 28/04/2023</p>	<p>Yes, I will. Because, when you go ahead in fixing religious concerns, tribal concerns, interest and power concerns. When the people who play these antics come they will meet a informed public that cannot be swayed and who can discern. If any politician or any mischief-makers come in with that idea. They will just tell them, "No wahala, no worry yourself.</p>
<p>Yecenu Sasetu, 12/05/2023, Abujau</p>	<p>Yes, the expansion would be good. Especially for peace education. The tensions are high all over the country right now. So, if there is accuracy in what is being reported or what is being put out, I know that it will help to douse a lot that is happening. Right now, we don't even know what is going to happen on May 29, tensions are really high right now. If that expansion will be done, it will be good. For civic education, we also need to know that we have the responsibility as individuals or citizens for whatever we share. We actually have the responsibility. Yes, the expansion would be good. I would suggest that.</p>
<p>Jah'swill Stephen, 27/04/2023, Lagos</p>	<p>Just like we are shaping our physical health. You just took the words out of my mouth. They need to do more, we are not saying what they have don't is not enough, but there is room for a better approach to how it works. So, one, while they are expanding the scope of the partnership. In partnering with Correct FM for instance, Correct FM covers 6 states, what happens to the other states? So, they need to expand the scope of coverage. I do not know how far they have gone; I am only making an assumption. Because, disinformation, information is important to one and all.</p>
<p>Joshua Moses, 14/06/2023, Calabar</p>	<p>I understand that that is it. But I know that, an organization like Africa Check works with data and research. If there is an existing research, because, I can go through social media and think somebody's voice is quite loud, but it is just something that happens during election season. And that could be all for that time. But really politician trying to *** sentiment. But I suggest that the foundation be laid. If that foundation is laid, or those foundations are laid, you can ascend, you can increase. Because for instance, it took the Lagos State Speaker saying what he said, for people to come and start saying are we talking about this again, we thought the election was over? Obviously, people's head were not in that direction. But owing that somebody like the speaker is there, then it becomes a thing. Then another thing I think they should look at is, fact checking from the receiver's end is ok, but the</p>

	<p>person generating the misinformation, what are we doing about him or her. I think the team needs to start paying sensitization visit to some of these political leaders to let them understand the weight of their utterances.</p>
Lamir Sadiq	<p>Yes. There is a lot of misinformation, especially that ****. So, if they are really going to look into that area, I think it will be good.</p>
Lanre Olagunju, 10/05/2023, Lagos	<p>Yes, Absolutely. If there are other areas of human endeavours or social problems that you think fact checking and sharing appropriate information can help, why not? Because these days editors are even struggling with a mirage of information. So, it is possible that you read something somewhere on Financial Times and it might be attributed to New York Times. But I remember that during the times we have a certain Sunday Igboho drama in Nigeria. Africa Check did a couple of fact check where old videos were used to buttress that there was chaos in Ogbomoso in Oyo, and that's it. If you watch during the Covid-19 pandemic, during health, yes it can also work in the areas of ensuring that we have peace and stability.</p>
Mohammed Rabiu Ali , 09/05/2023, Abuja	<p>Apart from what they've done in the past, more need to be done in terms of enlightenment and making people know about all these things in circulation. I think there's a need for them to do more in terms of public enlightenment and educating the electorate.</p>
Ojoma Akor , 08/05/2023, Abuja	<p>I will strongly recommend it. Because the same way it was able to help a large percentage of the public to overcome health misinformation, it will also help the public to overcome misinformation when it comes to their civic responsibilities. Because a lot of people were misled because of disinformation and misinformation.</p>
Oluwaseun Ola, 23/04/2023 Ibadan	<p>Right now, we only deal with public health information. I think that's limiting. I honestly feel that there are other areas where we can also deal with in terms of fact checking, issues that are beyond just health information. A lot of information flies around that are not true, that are not health related and that people should be properly informed about those things.</p>
Safiyah Bala Sambo, 12/05/2023, Sokoto	<p>By sensitizing and advocating on social media and face to face discussion to some gather groups in the society.</p>
Timothy Bamidele, 05/12/2023	<p>If a template has been built successfully, if you are attacking it with a new strategy/idea, you might just look at the way it will fit in.. For me, the moment a strategy is working, if you are pulling it with a new idea, let's put it properly and let it work. Because, when you do your measurement and evaluation, you will some gaps. When we do training, we give perspective in training. So, the training that was done</p>

	before the election, was pre-election, the training that is being conducted now is post-election narrative. And the same template, but now in post-election. Now putting it in proper context.
Tolulope Adeleru-Balogun, 12/06/2023, Lagos	We do that as well. As I said, our topic is not limited. If something is going on, we'll bring Africa Check onto another show, to be able to talk about the issues. I think we did that with the Kenya situation. The courts where people were buried, so that really needed... because, it was just flowing.
Tony, 11/06/2023, Lagos	Yes, definitely. Like I mentioned before, I wish Africa Check would also go big on politics of things. Really? Because whether we like it or not, politics affects everything, including health.
Ado Saiduwara 17/05/2023, Kano	We would like them to open up information to people in the rural area. This is where we have a lot of issues. More of the people that are not educated are living in rural areas.
Samira Aisha Bello, 18/05/2023 Kano	we have to explain to people and give them awareness. When you (can) find stories that are fake by yourself, I think that is the most important things they will have to put more effort in making.
Mayor Isaac Brown	Yes
Sodiq Ojurongbe, 07/05/2023 Lagos	Yes.
Tosin Ejalonibu, 28/04/2023, Lagos	I think the problem is not about scaling. Yes, there is still more work to do. I once advocated that we don't need to training journalist alone, I think we need to start training influencers also on fact checking. Because this people get a lot of information every day and they to need to know how to digest these things.

2023 Qualitative Evaluation of Africa Check in Nigeria

3.5.1. Would you like to sustain your relationship with Africa Check?

Finally, responses were sought on whether they would like to sustain their relations with Africa Check. In response all the participants were convinced that they need to sustain their relationship with Africa Check even if they change organisations as the case with some of them at the time of the survey. The responses are contained in table 22 and figure 9 respectively.

Table 22: Would you like to sustain your relationship with Africa Check?

	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	25	100.00
No	0	0.00
DOCUMENTS with code(s)	25	100.00
DOCUMENTS without code(s)	0	0.00
ANALYZED DOCUMENTS	25	100.00

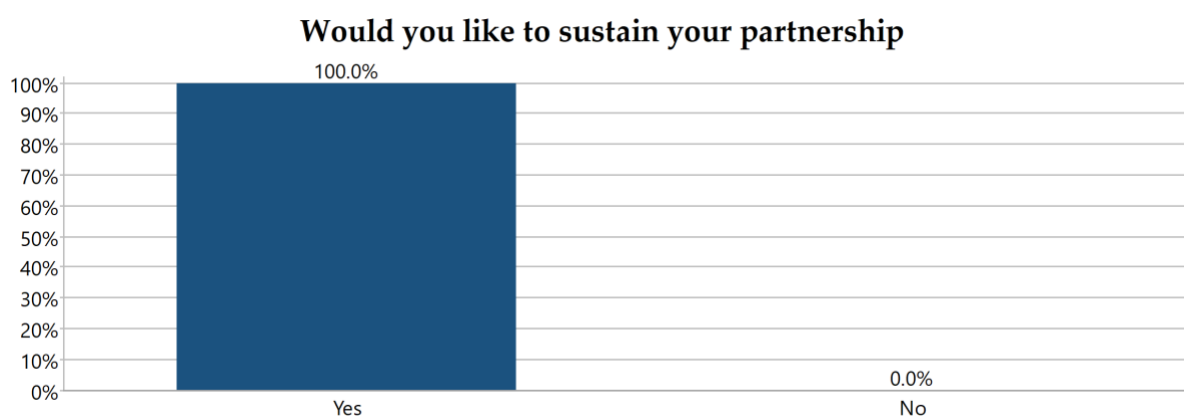


Figure 9: 2023 Qualitative Evaluation of Africa Check in Nigeria

4.0. Conclusion

The findings from this study have shown that the Africa Check has a well-nourished relationship with critical stakeholders in the civil society, media, and entire information ecosystem of Nigeria. All the selected media partners in the evaluation experienced unprecedented and impactful skill-upgrade in fact-checking health and development claims owing to partnering with Africa Check which has enabled the training of their staffers sometimes comprising administrative and professional cadres within each organization. Nonetheless, cognizant of the fast-evolving environment of threats of information disorder there is a need to increase the frequency of trainings, diversify same and explore developing peculiar trainings tailored to journalist and partners needs in each geo-political zone across the country.

In less than a decade Africa Check has become a household name in fact-checking acknowledged and respected by policy makers, institutions, the media, and the public across Nigeria. This has enabled it a status of strategic partner to critical stakeholders in the policy arena, media, thought-leaders, and organizations in public health and development partners. This has positioned Africa Check to intervene at critical stages through workshops, in the news-rooms and on the airwaves all the stakeholders to detect, pre-bunk and debunk in responding to information disorder.

Notwithstanding her limited resources and personnel, the Africa Check in Nigeria has birthed a new culture of fact-checking health and development claims. Having been tested by two defining events, that is, the Covid-19 pandemic and the testy 2023 elections, Africa Check has substantially enhanced the knowledge, awareness, and overall capacity in scientific and evidence-driven fact-checking health and development claims.

5.0. Recommendations

Despite the unprecedented progress that have been made by the Africa Check in Nigeria, substantial room still exists for rethinking its approaches towards dominating the information disorder threat environment. This would enhance the institutional capacity of its partners and expand the scope of her collaboration as well as public reach. Based on the findings of this study the following steps are proposed in the short (3-6 months) and medium (6-9 months):

5.1. Short-term interventions

- ✓ A one-day and in-person stakeholders interaction to validate this evaluation.
- ✓ There should include a mapping to update the critical stakeholders in the information management ecosystem including offline and on-line actors, institutions, thought-leaders, social influencers, policymakers and in the civil society for updating its stakeholders directory in Nigeria.

- ✓ An interface with these actors towards having a shared understanding of the information disorder threat environment.
- ✓ Conducting a collaborative needs-assessment of each actor within the universe of identified stakeholders.

5.2. Medium-Term Actions

Taking into consideration the feed-backs from the validation exercise, the following are recommended in the medium-term.

- ✓ A one or two-day summit should be held between the management of Africa Check in Nigeria in each geo-political zone with the critical stakeholders to concretize and possibly pilot initiatives before the next 2027 when the next elections would take place while also exploring quick-impact initiatives in states where off-cycle elections would hold before 2027.
- ✓ Through these interactions, the expectations and needs of the critical stakeholders would be constructively tabled which would also consolidate Africa Check's leadership and supportive role to critical stakeholders in dominating the information disorder threat environment.
- ✓ Initiating interface with Universities for a possible collaborative Master of Arts (MA) programme/degree in "fact-checking, early warning and national security" that would lead to the production of a critical mass of personnel to ensure the integrity of information in the public space while being mindful of national security.