



دولة الكويت
وزارة الإعلام



ROLE OF MEDIA IN COUNTERING MISINFOR- MATION TO PROMOTE SOCIAL COHESION

Webinar Report
15, 16 Nov 2020

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FOR THE UNITED NATIONS WORKSHOP ON THE

ROLE OF MEDIA IN COUNTERING MISINFORMATION TO PROMOTE SOCIAL COHESION

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15TH AND 16TH NOVEMBER 2020

STARTING AT 10:00 AM UNTIL 1:30 PM

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Under the auspices and participation of the esteemed Ministry of Information, You are kindly invited to join the upcoming Workshop titled “*Role of Media in Countering Misinformation to Promote Social Cohesion*” organized by the **United Nations in Kuwait**, and the **United Nations Network for Migration** including the **UN Human Rights Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa (OHCHR)**, The **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)**, the **Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)** and The **International Organization For Migration (IOM)**.

The webinar is organized for Kuwaiti media professionals aiming to focus on Countering Misinformation to Promote Social Cohesion through highlighting the importance of the Role of Media in times of humanitarian crisis; accurate reporting; guidance on international conventions and recommendations.

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Context:

The COVID-19 pandemic has seen demonstrations of overwhelming solidarity between nations and communities working together to address the impact and challenges it poses. Unfortunately, the pandemic has also given rise to a new wave of hate speech and discrimination.

'COVID-19 related hate speech' encompasses a broad range of disparaging expressions against certain individuals and groups that has emerged or been exacerbated as a result of the new coronavirus disease outbreak – from scapegoating, stereotyping, stigmatization and the use of derogatory, misogynistic, racist, xenophobic, Islamophobic or antisemitic language. Closely linked to this is the dissemination of 'disinformation' or 'misinformation' related to COVID-19.

Moreover, the COVID19 pandemic has resulted in misinformation and conspiracy theories about the scale of the pandemic and the origin, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of the disease. False information, including intentional disinformation, has been spread through social media, text messaging, mass media and even state media. In some countries, journalists have been arrested for allegedly spreading fake news about the pandemic. The World Health Organization has declared an "infodemic" of incorrect information about the virus, which poses risk to global health.

Expected Outcomes:

-  Media professionals will be able to acquire substantive knowledge about international human rights law and its related human rights mechanisms;
-  Media professionals will be better informed about the UN Human Rights office's good practises and policies in combating hate speech and misinformation;
-  Media professionals will be given a space to discuss and reflect on the way forward in terms of combating hate speech and misinformation, in line with their own internal policies and reporting requirements;
-  Media professionals will be able to acquire substantive knowledge about Refugee Law;
-  Media professionals will be introduced to the tools and data portals to use to get accurate and updated information from UNHCR;
-  Media professionals will be briefed on UNHCR's different terminologies;
-  Media professionals will be able to identify key considerations while writing media pieces about vulnerable populations.

Speakers

Dr. Tarek El Sheikh
Representative of the UN Secretary-General & Resident Coordinator to State of Kuwait

Faisal Almutlaqem
Assistant Undersecretary for International Media Sector

Dr. Samer Haddadin
Head of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Office to the State of Kuwait

Asmaa Aitssi
Coordination officer; Programme Advocacy and Communication in the Resident Coordinator Office

Zeina Mezher
Migration focal point for Lebanon at the ILO regional office for Arab States

Dr. Dalia Samhouri
Manager, Emergency Preparedness & International Health Regulations WHO EMRO

Lisa Abou Khaled
Communications and Public Information Officer for UNHCR in Lebanon

Lyn Eid
Human Rights Officer at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights – Regional Office for Middle East and North Africa

Ola Anan
Public Information & Communication Associate, UNHCR

Lina Elkurd
UNICEF Gulf Area Office as a communication specialist

Ghazi Mabrouk
Regional Communication Officer at IOM's Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa

Aneud Al-Zou'bi
Media and Communication Professional Co-founder of the non for profit company Nabd for MIL.

Roula Mikhael
Journalist and the founder of Maharat Foundation a leading freedom of expression watchdog group

Workshop Program

Day 1

Jessy Chahine
Public Information Officer
Middle East and North Africa Region

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|---------------|--------------------------|---|--|---|-----------------|
| 11:45 - 11:30 | 11:30 - 11:15 | 11:15 - 11:00 | 11:00 - 10:45 | 10:45 - 10:25 | 10:25 - 10:00 |
| Break | Q & A | Risks associated with spreading incorrect and false information about the COVID19 | Share experiences from the field about efforts in this area, namely Kuwait | Between Misinformation and Freedom of Expression | Opening remarks |
| | 13:30 - 13:10 | 13:10 - 12:40 | 12:40 - 12:00 | 12:00 - 11:45 | |
| | Closing Remarks of Day 1 | Q & A | How to counter the infodemic in time of Covid19 | Long lasting effects of discrimination and marginalization on children of migrant workers | |

Day 2

Louwah Al-Terkait
Communication and Public Relations Professional
Assistant External Relations Officer - UNHCR

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|---------------|---|---|--|---|---|
| 11:50 - 11:30 | 11:30 - 11:15 | 11:15 - 11:00 | 11:00 - 10:40 | 10:40 - 10:25 | 10:25 - 10:05 |
| Break | Q & A | UNHCR data portals and migration data portals and media page | Overview of UNHCR's mandate and its areas of work | Importance of Kuwait's Humanitarian contributions | Role of Media in times of humanitarian crisis |
| 13:30 - 13:20 | 13:20 - 12:50 | 12:50 - 12:30 | 12:30 - 12:10 | 12:10 - 11:50 | |
| | Writing Media Pieces with consideration to migration issues | Writing Media Pieces with consideration to vulnerable populations | Reporting on Migration and Displacement: definitions, key concepts and terminologies | Introduction to the UN Human Rights Strategy on Hate Speech | |

DISCUSSION POINTS

1st Day

UNICEF communication specialist presented the 'Effects of Discrimination on Children' which tackled the following points and opened the doors for fruitful discussion with the journalists:

- UNICEF mission to reach the world's most disadvantaged children, including the most vulnerable, as UNICEF believe that every word matters.
- The effect of discrimination on children includes, emotional and physical effect including low self-esteem, depression, less immune system and isolation.
- Discrimination against children and minorities has social effect on the community as well that includes, higher poverty rates, lower access to service, higher levels of risk behaviors and crimes.
- Examples of UNICEF's campaigns against discrimination was presented in the following videos:

o Would you stop if you saw this little girl on the street? | UNICEF

o Anti-bullying campaign in Egypt

o Communicating on COVID with PWD in Lebanon

- The journalists and attendees were engaged in the discussion and the presentation and shared valuable points of views and experiences.
- One of the journalists mentioned that even adults are being bullied by others, so discrimination and bullying are not limited to children.

Others were interested in how to deal with bullying and in UNICEF response. The presentation gave examples about the child protection programmes which UNICEF and partners implement and the psychosocial activities in schools and the importance of child-parents dialogs and discussions.

UNESCO consultant Ms. Anoud Zoubi presented “How to Counter the dis-infodemic in time of Covid-19” which tackled the following points and opened the doors for fruitful discussion with the journalists:

1. An Introduction to MIL

a) Why MIL Size and volume of information on the internet (locally, regionally, internationally), Most used platforms.

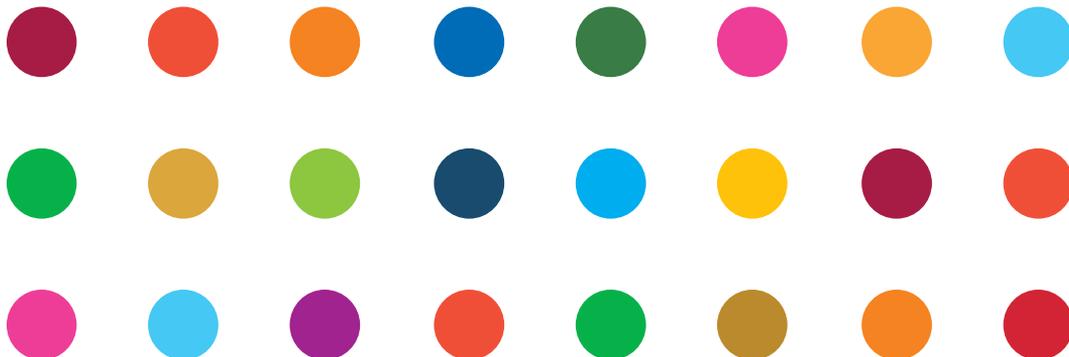
b) How does media messages affect our perceptions and behaviors?

2. Misleading News especially in time of covid19:

a) A review of traditional and latest technologies used when creating and/or altering a media message.

b) Types of mis-information & dis-information: major types in time of covid19.

The discussion focused on the importance of reporting accurately all the time and in the time of Covid-19. The topic was developed by sharing facts and figures on the size of data and information generated and shared on the digital sphere, and the number of people interacting on the main digital media platforms which means extra care should be taken to analyze before believing and sharing.



Sample of critical questions to add to technical methods of information verification:

- 1. Could there be malicious intent behind this share or tag?*
- 2. What does the person posting the content stand to gain by sharing?*
- 3. What could be the consequences for me/my professional credibility/a news media institution or employer if I share it?*
- 4. Have I worked hard enough to ascertain this individual's identity/affiliations/reliability/motivations (e.g. are they seeking to seed disinformation or profit from the sale of content acquired illegally without public interest justification)?*
- 5. Is this a human or bot?*

The engagement is a major challenge in online workshops, but it was addressed by including videos, stories and exercises to engage participants to think about the concepts rather than just listening to them being presented.

2nd Day

UNHCR: On the second day of the virtual focus, the areas covered by speakers focused on special considerations while reporting on vulnerable populations, UN Human Rights Strategy on Hate Speech, distinction between important terms (refugees, IDPs, and migrants), and the leading humanitarian role of the State of Kuwait.

• **Role of Media in Times of Humanitarian Crisis:**

- Clarified the definition of “Humanitarian Crisis” and the humanitarian response during these challenging times.
- Highlighted the role of media during humanitarian crises, noting its positive and negative impact.
- The importance of media’s role during humanitarian crises.
- Distinguished between the terms (Refugees, IDPs, and Migrants) and the importance of reflecting the information correctly with considerations to the different terminology.

• **Importance of Kuwait’s Humanitarian Contributions:**

- Provided an overview of Kuwait’s Humanitarian role, and the history of Kuwait’s membership and partnership with the UN organization.
- Historical overview of UNHCR’s presence and areas of work in Kuwait.
- Provided a brief about Kuwait’s response to key humanitarian situations in the area including Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Rohingya, COVID-19 and Lebanon.
- Explained how Kuwait is a leading role model as a Humanitarian partner to UNHCR.

• **Overview of UNHCR's Mandate and areas of Work:**

- Provided a clear distinction between the term (refugee and IDP)
- Overview of UNHCR's mandate, its establishment, and areas of work and intervention.
- Highlighted special legal considerations to the status of refugees, and the distinction between Refugee rights and migrants rights.

• **Sourcing updated facts and figures:**

- Provided a quick overview of UNHCR's facts and figures
- Explained how UNHCR works on getting the latest updates from the field on the ground, and the specified websites for publishing this information. While highlighting UNHCR's main annual publications.
- Noting the importance of media personnel to always seek verified and updated information while reporting on humanitarian situations.

• **Writing Media Pieces with Consideration to Vulnerable Populations**

- Key rules to keep in mind while interviewing vulnerable populations, mainly refugees.
 - o *Take permission*
 - o *Respect Privacy*
 - o *Clarify the objective*
 - o *Introduce which entity you are representing*
 - o *Language of publishing and the type of media coverage*
 - o *Obtain approval for publishing*
 - o *Be sensitive*
 - o *Special considerations for interviewing children*
 - o *Take context from humanitarian workers on the ground*
 - o *Ensure having a translator*
 - o *Get permission for photography*
 - o *Respect the anonymity of the interviewee*
- Highlight how media can transfer lives of vulnerable populations (BBC Video)

• **Key points raised by the attendees:**

- What is the specified criteria for a “refugee”
- How do we solve humanitarian crises and end the suffering of refugees without imposing sanctions on countries and resorting to political pressure?
- Are there any sanctions on countries that violate human rights?
- What is the difference between refugees and economic migrants? And does this distinction go against human rights laws?
- Supporting refugees and countries that help refugees will only contribute to the increase of their suffering ... shouldn't there be sanctions on countries that violate their rights?
- How can we increase the public's awareness of the refugee cause?
- Can the reports and findings of UNHCR be used against countries that violate human rights in specialized international courts?
- Lately, the refugee issue is increasing unprecedentedly ... isn't there a way to pressure the Governments who caused their departure?

• **Writing media pieces with consideration to migration issues**

- o *A brief introduction to IOM terminologies*
- o *The role of media in promoting social cohesion and combating hate speech*
- o *Journalism ethics with focus on migration reporting*
- o *Be professional/Ethical journalism*
- o *Responsible journalism/Journalists as opinion makers on social media*
- o *Tips when interviewing vulnerable migrants*

ILO's intervention covered definitions and key concepts and terminologies reporting on migration and displacement. The Session discussed the need to promote sensitive, balanced and accurate media coverage with regard to migrant workers and refugees with an objective to produce high-quality reports that contribute to constructive public discussions of the issues at hand and influence public opinion.

Examples were used how effective news coverage can mobilize public support, change stereotypes about displacement and migration, and build a culture of rights in dealing with these issues at the level of individual interaction or the ability to influence public policy-making and legislation. The session also explored how the media can play a role in preventing the deception that migrant workers face, as employment opportunities are often directed to migrant workers through the media.

According to the ILO, the main challenges that need to be addressed are: subjective media reporting, inaccuracy in terminologies, too much focus on sensational stories, use of terms that promote stereotypes and discrimination, lack of accuracy and pluralistic approach, limited positive and inspiring stories on migrant workers and refugees.

To address these challenges, the session discussed the importance of using precise terms about migration and displacement and anchoring the terms in human rights dimension linked to international treaties and standards. A detailed accounts on the meaning and implications of selected terms was then explored.

Terms such as migrant, migrant workers, refugee, decent work, domestic work, runaway worker, human trafficking,

forced labour, and irregular workers. A main point was also explained on nuances in translation to Arabic especially in relation to the term migrant vs foreigner and its limitation and implication.

To promote a constructive approach in reporting the session presented a comparative example from actual news on a neutral report vs a negative one.

The ILO session ended by sharing the news that behind the development of the COVID-19 vaccine, two Turkish immigrants in Germany who studied medicine in the 1990s and worked in the search for a cure for cancer. Would such positive achievement change the world's view on migrants? And could the media reflect the appreciation and praise for the efforts exerted by migrant workers in caring for families and building cities and economies in destination countries?

The ILO finally shared a list of references for media to consult to cover future themes related to migrant workers and refugees.

IOM Ghazi Mabrouk kickstarted his session with an essential display and distinction of technical terminology associated with the migration narrative to promote the correct and proper usage of each term of reference.

This help align the level of technical knowledge with the audience and contributed to previous sessions with similar purposes.

In the context of countering misinformation, the facilitator then proceeded to focus on the responsibility to report and covering stories while being mindful of one's emotions towards the topic at hand and the importance of filtering such emotions and perceptions from covering the story.

With the role and vitality of media today and the influence media professionals have on their institutions and the impact on their following, they are advised to maintain an ethical standpoint with stories they cover, especially when work

ing with vulnerable categories of different societies. Mabrouk further honed on the reality of human emotions and the importance of keeping them in-check. With that in mind, he shared a few substantive tips on working directly with vulnerable migrants to guide on information collection and analysis in an ethical and professional manner for responsible and accurate reporting.