

Reporting by Session Note-takers at the 2019 Annual Consultations with NGOs

Date:	4 July, 14.00 – 16.00
Session Title:	Using Social Media to Drive Change
Moderator:	Gissela Lomax, Head of Social Media, UNHCR, Dante Licon, Head of Social Media, IFRC. Guest speakers: Zeina Yazigi, Syrian journalist in UAE, Social influencer, Fadak Al Fayadh, former Iraqi refugee now Australian community leader, Guled Mire, former Somali refugee, now NZ refugee NGO leader.
UNHCR focal point:	Gisela Lomax, Head of Social Media
NGO focal point:	Dante Licon, Head of Social Media, IFRC
Major points arising from speakers and discussions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinguish between Misinformation, disinformation and malinformation as to address them may need different strategies and responses. Addressing them is a massive challenge as these tend to spread much faster on social media than stories from reputable news institutions. • Possible to counter the spread of mis/disinformation by working with the big social media platforms, one good example is the vaccination issue, where advocacy by politicians and WHO influenced YouTube to replace unscientific videos with vetted ones at the top of search results for questions relating to why vaccinate one's child. The other platforms followed suit. • With numbers of followers increasing daily and the post-millennials living their lives through social media, the big social media platforms have become immensely powerful but not adequately equipped to assume this responsibility. National legal frameworks are being developed to tackle the spread of hate speech but raises difficult questions on freedom of expression. • Not only can frequency of hate speech posts on social media be a prediction of real-life hate crimes but the spread of hate speech and mis/disinformation can fuel violence and conflicts as seen in Myanmar and India. 	
Recommendations/Conclusions/Decisions on the way forward	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new way of volunteering: Ask our audience to be active on social media sharing messages, posting messages and commenting on posts enhancing a positive narrative, in particular in cases of hate speech a community response is the most effective. • Reaching new audiences – beyond 'the converted': Identify themes eg. Sports, Food to gain access to groups that would otherwise not be on the radar screen of UNHCR and NGO partners. Identify household names and figures (actors, sportsmen/women, influencers) who either are refugees and or who can contribute to portray and share a positive narrative. • Working with global platforms: Build strategic relationships with influential staff members at the big social platforms (you tube – second biggest search engine has to some extent been overlooked) who are sympathetic to the cause to collaborate on creative and strategic campaigns. • Don't use facts to convince opponents, in particular today with the massive flow of alternative facts, more effective to reach persons through value based messages and emotional stories – with real persons. 	

Top two quotes from the session

- On social media, false news beat the truth – Dante Licona
- Traditional media is my homeland; social media is my resettlement plan –Zeinab Yazigi

Any general points regarding UNHCR-NGO partnerships

The massive task of countering hate speech and mis/disinformation and spreading a positive narrative on social media needs strategic responses of UNHCR and all its partners, both in working directly with the big social media platforms and to inspire and influence their followers and reaching out beyond the already converted.