

Community-Led Online Misinformation and Rumour Management



Introduction

UNHCR's operations are increasingly using social media platforms to support their engagement with communities and to strengthen their Accountability to Affected People. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the organization has rapidly adapted to physical distancing restrictions across a number of operations, which has resulted in a rapid uptake in the use of remote communication channels such as WhatsApp Trees and Facebook pages. The adoption of these communication channels is not without its challenges - the velocity of information being shared and the expectation of an 'immediate response' has significant resource implications for UNHCR's operations and partners. Additionally, misinformation and rumours are rife on social media, with potentially dangerous consequences for Persons of Concern.

Context

In the last 5 years an increasing number of humanitarian organizations have started to implement and manage so-called "Rumors Tracking Mechanisms". Due to the extent of rumours and misinformation circulating around COVID 19, further work in this area and collaborations have increased significantly in efforts to address challenges and arising issues. Promising practices indicate the important role that communities play in monitoring and managing rumours that are being shared within them. A community-led approach to the moderation and validation of information circulating in a community can strengthen 'real-time listening' that leads to changes or resolutions and build trust in both responses and actors.

The Innovation Service has received many requests from operations seeking support with regards to online misinformation and rumour management. To address this, we are launching a Call for proposals to test the creation and management of a rumors tracking – misinformation debunking - system, managed with the support of existing UNHCR community volunteers (or equivalent), partners and POCs.

Scope and Objectives

The system would seek to leverage existing focal points and networks i.e outreach volunteers, community leaders and representatives, to engage them via WhatsApp (or equivalent) to support them to detect, categorize and respond to misinformation, rumors and queries at community/settlement level. The system would seek to train a series of 'administrators' to receive and categorize rumors and questions received by UNHCR focal points, volunteers etc. The administrators would be trained to identify and disseminate verified answers, connecting with the broader humanitarian community and with UNHCR to find reliable information to develop answers in the form of videos, individual responses, audio files and so on. Depending on the situation in country, there could be wider engagement with other actors already working on rumour management and misinformation.

Application

The phases of the system set-up would usually follow the following steps:

1. A mapping of existing social media channels/networks - including for example any existing [WhatsApp Trees](#);
2. A mapping of existing community structures, outreach volunteers and other UNHCR associated staff/volunteers, partners and structures/groups on the ground along with other actors working on rumour management;
3. Selection of administrators for the system ensuring representation of different marginalized and vulnerable groups;
4. Training of administrators and design dedicated workflows to process rumors, respond and track them over time;
5. Deploying the system in the field, first with trusted sources and trusted groups and eventually thinking about opening it up to all PoCs;
6. Monitoring the system, adapt and re-adjust the workflows over time before finalizing the system.

To submit an Expression of Interest to this challenge click the Apply Now button.

(You will need to login to your UNHCR account)