Policy Workshop on Impact of Misinformation & Disinformation in the Global South

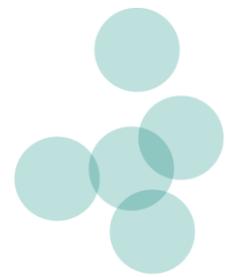*Hosted by GDL member Gaurav Sharma and Sylvia Mukasa*
Proposed date and location: April – May'2023, in-person and hybrid event in Nairobi, Kenya

The current global events such as the elections in the Global South, the pandemic (COVID-19) led propaganda and climate change misinformation distribution has highlighted the power of the spread of misinformation and disinformation and information inequity in general in the Global South. The penetration and low cost of the smart phone has made access to information on social media easy and cheap. The problem remains that most of the information floating on these social media channels remains un-verified and un-audited. Most Global South economies have a high – usage of video now and consumption of video content is on the rise, both creation and localised content. This is fuelling in a lot of local actors at disseminating unverified information to the masses in a short span of time.

The global south economies do not have a good data protection and personal data protection laws in place and thus, the flow of misinformation and disinformation remains one of the fundamental challenges for the law and enforcement agencies. LMICs do not have effective and established social security norms protecting the rights of the citizen. In addition, a lot of divisional, communal and religious information flows via the online video content. Factors aggravating the misinformation and disinformation are many. For example, low levels of literacy, the lack of professional resources at arresting the flow of falsified information within the administration and with regulators, ones of information flow and control lying with the big social media tech platforms to name just a few. This inequity in information is exacerbated during events such as elections, natural disasters and communal and religious ceremonies.

This concept note provides a proposed framework for the implementation of a peer learning and knowledge-sharing workshop with use cases on misinformation and disinformation in the global south. The workshop shall compare the systemic inequalities in information distribution, control and consumption with the economies of the Global South for Global Diplomacy Lab members, policymakers and civil-society actors with regards to preventive health and misinformation and disinformation.

The incubator phase of the workshop will be dedicated to generating a understanding through use-cases of current challenges linked to

"Misinformation and Disinformation in global south", with a specific focus on digital literacy and social media penetration and misuse. By targeting regional stakeholders with particular interest misinformation and disinformation and their implications for local societies. The curriculum will be based largely upon (expert) group interaction, knowledge sharing, and real-life examples from the global south countries. Participants will be presented with information using different formats and methods such as case studies, group activities, slide and audio-visual presentations, as well as hands-on practice and reflection. Emphasis will be given to providing a broad overview on: (1) Relevance to developmental goals and agendas; (2) inherent risks and challenges regarding misinformation and disinformation and strategies for mitigation and prevention; (3) key issues to consider in regulating misinformation and (4) impact of misinformation and disinformation on youth population. Participants will apply the **ADIDS methodology** (Activity, Discussion, Input, Deepening, Synthesis). Content and exercises will be adapted to suit an in-person event to ensure a highly interactive working environment and to promote peer-to-peer learning and exchange.

The impact phase of the workshop will centre around a **policy discussion** to identify key themes that should be included in **online consumption of misinformation** with a particular focus on lessons learnt from the COVID-19 information flow. An **abductive approach** will be used as facilitation methodology to provide a flexible framework in which participants can work together while remaining grounded in a set of principles that allows the emergence of new ideas. In this regard, the abductive method will combine both **inductive** (ideas are generated from the bottom up) and **deductive** (ideas are generated within a prescribed framework) approaches. The anticipated outcome of the policy discussion is that the results generated during the workshop will be used to inform an initial draft for **actionable policy recommendations in the Global South at arresting the spread of misinformation and disinformation**. A multi-stakeholder approach including policy and communication experts as well as civil-society representatives will ensure that a wide range of perspectives and varying interests are incorporated. In addition, sessions dedicated to building consensus, identifying priorities for the group, and establishing how they should be integrated into the information flow and consumption guidelines will be included in the policy drafting and planning sessions.

The results will be presented as reference to policy makers (such as foreign ministries), relevant stakeholders, GDL members and partners, as well as local and global practitioners.