



Deposited via The University of Sheffield.

White Rose Research Online URL for this paper:

<https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/id/eprint/240203/>

Version: Published Version

Article:

Madrid-Morales, D., Wasserman, H., Davies-Laubscher, N. et al. (2026) How civil society coalition-building affects information integrity during elections: evidence from four African countries. *Information, Communication & Society*. ISSN: 1369-118X

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118x.2026.2647360>

Reuse

This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs (CC BY-NC-ND) licence. This licence only allows you to download this work and share it with others as long as you credit the authors, but you can't change the article in any way or use it commercially. More information and the full terms of the licence here: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/>

Takedown

If you consider content in White Rose Research Online to be in breach of UK law, please notify us by emailing eprints@whiterose.ac.uk including the URL of the record and the reason for the withdrawal request.



How civil society coalition-building affects information integrity during elections: evidence from four African countries

Dani Madrid-Morales, Herman Wasserman, Nicola Davies-Laubscher & Fatoumata Sow

To cite this article: Dani Madrid-Morales, Herman Wasserman, Nicola Davies-Laubscher & Fatoumata Sow (17 Apr 2026): How civil society coalition-building affects information integrity during elections: evidence from four African countries, *Information, Communication & Society*, DOI: [10.1080/1369118X.2026.2647360](https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2026.2647360)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2026.2647360>



© 2026 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



[View supplementary material](#)



Published online: 17 Apr 2026.



[Submit your article to this journal](#)



Article views: 74



[View related articles](#)



[View Crossmark data](#)

How civil society coalition-building affects information integrity during elections: evidence from four African countries

Dani Madrid-Morales ^{a,b}, Herman Wasserman ^b, Nicola Davies-Laubscher ^c and Fatoumata Sow^d

^aSchool of Information, Journalism and Communication, The University of Sheffield, Sheffield, UK; ^bCentre for Information Integrity in Africa (CINIA), Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, South Africa; ^cDigital Media Sociology Lab, Centre for Film and Media Studies, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa;

^dDépartement des Sciences Sociales / Licence Communication pour le Développement, UFR Sciences Sociales et Environnementales, Université du Sine Saloum El Hadj Ibrahima Niass (USSEIN), Kaffrine, Senegal

ABSTRACT

This article examines how civil society actors promote information integrity during elections through coalition-building, drawing on evidence from four African countries (the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Senegal, and South Africa) that held elections between 2022 and 2024. In these countries, disinformation, extreme speech, and other forms of information manipulation often target electoral processes, threatening to undermine public trust, and amplifying societal divisions. Based on an analysis of 36 semi-structured interviews with members of civil society organisations, fact-checkers, regulators, and media professionals, we describe how these actors creatively built coalitions to enhance information integrity, platform accountability, and democratic processes, and discuss how they responded to the presence/absence of policy and regulatory frameworks. Despite resource constraints, their efforts highlight the potential of broad-based coalitions to safeguard information integrity during elections, for example by linking fact-checkers with community media and grassroots organisations, while emphasising the importance of sustained interventions beyond election cycles. We also show how civil society coalitions engage platforms, regulators, and media actors to safeguard information integrity, offering lessons for global debates on information governance beyond platform-centric approaches.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 14 September 2025
Accepted 15 March 2026

KEYWORDS

Information integrity;
disinformation; elections;
civil society

Elections around the world face increasing threats from false and misleading information in the form of disinformation campaigns, targeted extreme speech attacks, and other types of information manipulation and interference. Evidence shows that these threats

CONTACT Dani Madrid-Morales  d.madrid-morales@sheffield.ac.uk  School of Information, Journalism and Communication (C638), The University of Sheffield, 2 Whitham Rd, Sheffield S10 2AH, Sheffield, UK

 Supplemental data for this article can be accessed online at <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2026.2647360>.

© 2026 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

can directly undermine electoral integrity by distorting public discourse (Norris et al., 2020). Within Africa's diverse electoral contexts certain vulnerabilities stand out, including the rapid adoption of digital technologies combined with weaknesses in governance and under-resourced media systems (Roberts & Karekwaivanane, 2024). The spread of false information during elections can deepen intergroup divides that have characterised many African societies since the colonial era, ignite residual tensions, and contribute to the erosion of trust in democratic institutions (Mare et al., 2019). Other structural issues such as inadequate regulation, elite capture of the information environment, and profound inequalities exacerbate the risks posed by electoral disinformation. This demands innovative responses from civic actors (Authors, 2025).

To safeguard information integrity around elections, recent scholarship emphasises a 'whole-of-society' approach, advocating collaborative frameworks that unite various stakeholders (Thornton, 2025; United Nations, 2024). This study focuses explicitly on one type of collaboration: coalition-building efforts by civil society actors in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Kenya, Senegal, and South Africa during each country's most recent elections from 2022 to 2024. Drawing on 36 semi-structured interviews with a range of stakeholders involved in safeguarding information integrity and fighting disinformation, we address two questions: a) how do civil society actors, from fact-checking organisations and the media to activists and academics, respond to the presence or absence of policy and regulatory frameworks? And b) how do these actors build coalitions to enhance information integrity, platform accountability, and democratic processes? We find that grassroots coalitions emerged in all four countries, emphasising adaptive strategies such as multiplatform fact-checking, media literacy programmes and advocacy for greater platform accountability. While scholarship on information integrity elsewhere often frames civil society coalitions as complementary to regulation and institutionalised governance, our cases suggest a more structural role. We find that several of the coalitions we describe in this paper operate as *governance infrastructures*, performing monitoring, coordination, and accountability functions that formal institutions are unable or unwilling to fulfil. The cases we present also underscore the importance of sustaining activity between election cycles and of locally adapted, 'custom-built' (Ong et al., 2020) designs, highlighting distinctive dynamics in African contexts.

While this article focuses on institutional and organisational responses to information integrity challenges, we recognise that electoral participation in many African contexts is shaped by a wider set of dynamics, from political intimidation, vulgar and violent speech, to long-standing distrust in elite actors. Prior research suggests that many voters, particularly in rural areas, rely on trusted interpersonal networks and community media rather than solely on online fact-checking outputs (Wefwafwa, 2025). Our analysis therefore does not seek to explain voter behaviour directly, but rather to examine how civil society coalitions attempt to preserve the integrity of the broader information environment within which electoral participation takes place.

Conceptualising information integrity

Information integrity was originally articulated within information science and cybersecurity as a property of information systems, emphasising the consistency and dependability of information content and processes (Harley & Cooper, 2021) 2003. More

recently, the term has been broadened in policy and governance debates to capture the trustworthiness of information ecosystems as a whole, including the social, institutional, and political conditions under which information is produced, circulated, and interpreted (United Nations, 2024). Organisations like the United Nations (UN) and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) have begun adopting ‘information integrity’ as a more comprehensive framework than concepts such as ‘information disorder’, ‘disinformation’, or ‘misinformation.’ In this context, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defines information integrity as encompassing ‘the accuracy, consistency, and reliability of the information content, processes, and systems necessary to sustain a healthy information ecosystem’ (UNDP, 2024, p. 5), while the UN’s Global Principles for Information Integrity conceptualise it as a state ‘where freedom of expression is fully enjoyed and where accurate, reliable information, free from discrimination and hate, is accessible to everyone within an open, inclusive, safe, and secure information environment’ (UN, 2024, p. 3). A high-integrity information ecosystem ensures that information remains truthful and coherent, fostering informed decision-making and supporting democratic participation (OECD, 2024).

The concept of information integrity has gained traction as a way to sidestep contentious definitional debates around terms like ‘dis-/mis – and mal-information’ and to foreground broader systemic concerns rather than narrow content-level fixes. This shift reflects growing recognition that information failures not only result from malicious falsehoods but also emerge from weak infrastructures and misaligned incentives (Vaccari & Chadwick, 2020). For example, digital media ecosystems shaped by algorithmic curation and engagement-driven business models often prioritise attention over accuracy, creating fertile ground for the circulation of false or polarising content, especially during elections (Breuer, 2024), which in turn erodes public trust and social cohesion (Phillips & Milner, 2021). Moreover, the terms ‘disinformation’ and ‘fake news’ have become increasingly politicised, with some governments using them to legitimise censorship and repression. (Simiyu, 2022).

During electoral processes, which are the focus of this paper, safeguarding information integrity includes the availability of trustworthy election-related information, confidence in credible journalism, and access to a plurality of views (International IDEA, 2024). This is particularly important nowadays, since digitalisation has transformed electoral communication, lowering barriers to participation, fragmenting the news ecosystem, and weakening editorial oversight once provided by legacy news media (Garnett & James, 2020). The imperative of safeguarding information integrity is particularly evident in less robust electoral environments as is the case of many African states with histories of contested elections, foreign interference, and high levels of media capture (Mare et al., 2019). These contexts create fertile ground for disinformation. For instance, rumours about vote rigging or voter intimidation can sow confusion, deepen intergroup or regional divides, and undermine trust in electoral commissions and judicial outcomes (Sivalo, 2024). In this environment, citizens may find it difficult to distinguish credible sources from fabricated content, particularly without robust media and platform accountability.

Recent African scholarship also emphasises that electoral information practices are embedded in dense offline and semi-private communication ecologies, including WhatsApp groups, community radio, and trusted interpersonal networks. Studies from Kenya,

Namibia, Zimbabwe, and South Africa show that informal verification, peer-to-peer correction, and community-based sensemaking often coexist with professional fact-checking, especially in rural and peri-urban contexts (Mare & Munoriyarwa, 2025; Wefwafwa et al., 2025). Historical analyses further demonstrate that contemporary digital dynamics are layered onto longer-standing patterns of press-state relations, political contestation, and mediated authority, rather than representing a sharp break from earlier media systems (Kibarabara & Cheruiyot, 2025). This body of work cautions against treating platform-visible disinformation as the sole determinant of electoral participation, while reinforcing the importance of coalitions that link professional verification with locally trusted intermediaries.

Safeguarding information integrity

Consensus has built around the idea that addressing issues related to information integrity requires a multidimensional ‘whole-of-society’ approach (Tully et al., 2022). As the UNDP (2023) argues, a robust information integrity framework rests on three interlinked pillars: i) preventing the creation of falsehoods, ii) building public resilience, and iii) enabling timely detection and response. This involves diverse strategies, from strengthening independent journalism, reforming platform governance, and improving digital and media literacy, to equipping institutions and civil society with the capacity to monitor and counter emerging threats. Scholars also increasingly stress that safeguarding information integrity demands a mix of complementary interventions across domains such as education, technology, regulation, and collaboration (Mudavadi & Madrid-Morales, 2025).

While academic literature on safeguarding information integrity remains limited, it is possible to draw on typologies of counter-disinformation interventions to catalogue existing approaches. One widely cited distinction focuses on the stage of the information lifecycle that an intervention targets. Pre-emptive measures such as media literacy programmes (Tully et al., 2020), ‘pre-bunking’ (Lewandowsky & van der Linden, 2021), and support for quality journalism (Shabbir et al., 2022) aim to reduce the likelihood that people will believe or share falsehoods in the first place. Reactive measures, by contrast, seek to identify and correct false content once it is already circulating. These include fact-checking (Clayton et al., 2020), content moderation (De Gregorio & Stremlau, 2023) and legislation (Judge & Korhani, 2020). Evidence on the effectiveness of many of these approaches is growing (see, for example, Walter et al., 2020). Another helpful distinction contrasts behavioural or cognitive interventions, which seek to influence how individuals interpret and evaluate information (e.g., through critical thinking prompts or games), with structural or systemic ones, which aim to reshape the environments that allow false information, hate speech and others to thrive. Such structural interventions include regulatory efforts to enhance transparency in platform algorithms or to govern digital political advertising (Borz & De Francesco, 2024; Dad & Khan, 2023).

Technology firms have introduced their own set of interventions such as algorithms to detect and downrank false content, labelling misleading posts, and partnering with third-party factcheckers. Recently, these interventions have shifted, with platforms like X now relying on ‘community notes’, while Facebook reducing its fact-checking partnerships in some areas, underscoring the volatility of platform-led approaches. Even though some

evidence shows that warning labels on social media can reduce users' willingness to share false content (Pennycook et al., 2020), the effect of these efforts in the broader information environment remains uneven. In many African contexts, under-investment in moderation, especially in local languages, allows harmful content to circulate (De Gregorio & Stremlau, 2023)2021. Encrypted services like WhatsApp pose further challenges, as moderation is technically constrained beyond public channels. Some mitigation measures have been shown to reduce virality (de Freitas Melo et al., 2019), but structural solutions, including algorithm reform and greater transparency, are still required (Donovan, 2020). Governments can also enhance information integrity by supporting public interest media, updating electoral regulations, and investing in education (Tully et al., 2022). In Kenya, this includes agreements between electoral bodies, media councils, platforms, and civil society fact-checkers (Miyandazi & Thuo, 2025). However, poorly designed government responses can threaten basic rights. Vague 'fake news' laws can suppress critical journalism in Africa (Garbe et al., 2023; Simiyu, 2022), and internet shutdowns limit access to trustworthy information (Mare, 2020).

Because interventions by large social media platforms have been unable to secure the quality of the information environment, civil society actors have played an especially vital role in African democracies. Independent fact-checkers like Africa Check, Dubawa, and PesaCheck monitor political narratives and verify claims across several countries (Mutahi & Kimari, 2020). Their work is often complemented by media literacy campaigns and voter education initiatives. In Zimbabwe, a 2023 project by the Centre for Innovation and Technology trained journalists and citizens to identify and counter online disinformation, raising public awareness (Sivalo, 2024). During elections, civil society acts as a first responder, conducting real-time rumour tracking, coordinating media literacy campaigns, and forming coalitions to address information integrity challenges (Tully, 2025). However, these actors face obstacles like limited funding, safety risks, and difficulties reaching rural or closed messaging network audiences.

While the literature offers extensive taxonomies of interventions, evidence suggests that isolated efforts often prove insufficient against the systemic nature of information challenges during elections (Ong et al., 2020). Platform-led interventions remain patchy and particularly under-resourced in African contexts, while state responses frequently oscillate between inadequate action and rights-threatening overreach. Civil society actors, though vital, often operate with limited reach and resources. Increasingly, the literature points to coalitions and multi-stakeholder initiatives (journalists, fact-checkers, civil society, electoral officials, academics, and sometimes platforms) as a necessary layer in protecting information integrity (Mudavadi & Madrid-Morales, 2025). Although international organisations increasingly advocate for 'whole-of-society' approaches, we know relatively little about how such coalitions form. This gap is particularly pronounced in many African electoral contexts. While growing evidence points to the creation of multistakeholder coalitions across the continent, there is no comprehensive analysis of how these coalitions are built and sustained, particularly during elections. To address this gap, in this paper we ask:

RQ1: How do civil society actors in the DRC, Kenya, Senegal, and South Africa respond to the presence or absence of policy and regulatory frameworks to safeguard information integrity during elections?

RQ2: How do these actors build coalitions to enhance information integrity, platform accountability, and democratic processes?

While RQ1 explores how actors interpret and navigate the regulatory and political conditions shaping their information environments, RQ2 examines their practical solutions to those challenges. By pairing these perspectives, we are able to connect the structural constraints identified by existing scholarship with the innovative, context-specific forms of (in)formal governance that emerge in the four African electoral settings that we studied.

Methods

This paper draws on a dataset of 36 semi-structured interviews with actors involved in activities to safeguard information integrity. We selected semi-structured interviews as the sole research method because they are best suited to capture the contextual nuance from practitioners than other social sciences methods (Kvale, 1996). Most forms of information manipulation are not uniform or universally understood phenomena, as their contours are shaped by political, technological, and institutional factors that vary across regions (Udupa et al., 2021). Semi-structured interviews enabled us to investigate these dimensions in a flexible but focused manner, allowing for comparability across cases. We selected the DRC, Kenya, Senegal, and South Africa as case studies for their differing media environments, electoral histories, and regulatory frameworks. The geographic and organisational breadth of the sample allows for a comparative analysis across diverse institutional and sociopolitical settings. Ethical review for this project was done by the School of Information, Journalism and Communication at the University of Sheffield (Reference Number 065086).

Interviews were conducted between June and August 2024. We used purposive sampling to ensure diversity across actor types and national contexts. Interviewees were drawn from media houses, fact-checking organisations, academic institutions, civil society, and state-affiliated bodies. Anonymity was offered to all participants and therefore we refer to interviewees with a code (see Table A1 in the Online Appendix). Participants did not give consent for their data to be shared publicly, so full transcripts of the interviews cannot be shared. This study does not include interviews with citizens or voters. This was a deliberate methodological choice aligned with the article's focus on organisational responses to information integrity challenges during elections. Our aim was to understand how civil society actors, media organisations, regulators, and fact-checking initiatives coordinate, negotiate legitimacy, and develop coalitional strategies under constrained political and regulatory conditions. While citizens are the ultimate consumers of electoral information, capturing grassroots perceptions would require a different research design, including surveys or ethnographic fieldwork, which lay beyond the scope of this study. We return to this limitation in the conclusion and outline it as a priority for future research.

We used a single interview guide for all conversations, which included questions such as 'How much of a challenge was disinformation in the last elections?', 'What types of activities did your organisation engage in during recent elections?', and 'What should be the role of different actors such as public institutions, donors and platforms in safeguarding the information environment?' A copy of the interview guide can be obtained

from the lead author. Interviews were conducted in English or French, depending on the interviewee's preference, and ranged from 20 to 60 min. All but two interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. The other two interviewees provided written responses. French-language transcripts were translated into English to facilitate comparative analysis. Thematic analysis was used to find patterns in the interview data, following Braun and Clarke (2021). We started by extracting and summarising the main themes for each research question. This process included identifying examples, anecdotes, and quotes from the transcriptions. Next, we extracted country-specific themes from these summaries, and we created country-level typologies of coalitions and responses. These country-level typologies and themes were then coalesced for easier comparative analysis. The findings below present these typologies, as well as the main themes identified through this iterative process.

Findings

Responding to policy and regulatory frameworks

Respondents across the four countries identified a wide spectrum of threats to information integrity in electoral contexts, including disinformation, hate speech, gendered abuse, and new forms of synthetic media such as deepfakes and AI-generated audio. While these issues were common, they were not evenly distributed. In some contexts, the central problem was absent or outdated regulation, in others the weaponisation of existing laws for political ends, and in others the lack of rules to guarantee timely access to good information.

A first concern was the absence of regulatory frameworks adapted to online harms, leaving legacy oversight bodies focused on broadcast media while false information thrived unchecked. In the DRC, the gap was clear: 'We don't have a law adapted to follow the internet (...) outside of the traditional media' (CG_AC001). Oversight bodies like the Superior Audiovisual and Communications Council (in French: Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel et de la Communication or CSAC) remained focused on broadcast content, while harmful online speech flourished unchecked. In Kenya, the challenge was not the absence of regulation, but its distortion. A civil society advocate recalled:

There's a famous political blogger, and he has been charged with spreading false news because he said: 'the president is stupid.' That is how false information, disinformation laws are being applied. They're not being applied to actually remedy the problem. They are being applied to kill dissidents and critical voices (KE_CS001).

Such selective enforcement was seen as part of a wider issue in which 'governments themselves are part of this problem' (KE_CS001), hiring bloggers and influencers to promote favourable narratives while punishing dissent, thus weaponising existing legal frameworks. In Senegal, another problem was the lack of regulatory frameworks that support access to quality information. As one civil society actor put it, 'the first problem is having access to the real information and ... transferring it to our platforms' (SN_CS002). Without a right-to-information framework, misinformation could circulate unchallenged for days before official clarification.

Interviewees also pointed to gendered disinformation as an ongoing danger. In Kenya, one media expert described the 'horrible' online space faced by women candidates, who

endure relentless trolling and sexualised parody content designed to push them out of political life, noting the lack of legal recognition that online abuse ‘doesn’t have to translate offline for you to take action’ (KE_ME002). In the DRC, a media monitor recounted how presidential contender Denis Mukwege was targeted through manipulated images, deepfakes, and derogatory hashtags framing him as an LGBT advocate, a tactic they described as a deliberate electoral strategy to ‘kill his campaign’ (CG_ME003). Across contexts, responses to the absence/inadequacy of regulation blended improvisation with advocacy. Yet some stressed that without structural reform, these efforts would remain reactive and cyclical:

We can’t just wait until the next election to come back together. It’s about asking: how do you keep it going, how do you keep that momentum, and map out where the gaps are so that when the next election does come up, the foundation you’ve built is already addressing everyday issues? Because misinformation doesn’t just happen during an election period: it’s constant. (KE_CS002)

Faced with limited institutional tools to address these issues, interviewees described how they developed their own quasi-regulatory mechanisms. In the DRC, the Politoscope initiative, a grassroots project launched by a network of Congolese political scientists to monitor and combat online hate speech, became a de facto accountability tool, tracking and publishing statistics on harmful speech:

In our weekly reports, we start by presenting the dominant themes, then we show the tables and indicators, and we highlight the ‘top’ instances of violent or insulting remarks. We always end with the statistics: violence marked in red, with insults consistently at the top of the ranking. This work helps to document the harm and provide an evidentiary basis for legislative change. (CG_AC001)

These public outputs were meant to create reputational costs for political actors, even without formal sanctions. In Senegal, the media monitors of the Collective of Civil Society Organisations for Elections (in French, Collectif des Organisations de la Société Civile pour les Élections or COSCE) identified and escalated ‘divisive, ethnically-charged, and biased content’ to the broadcast regulator (SN_CS003), while in South Africa, the Independent Electoral Commission’s partnership with Media Monitoring Africa (MMA) allowed citizens to directly report false content thorough a platform called ‘Real 411’. One fact-checker described it as ‘an example of a good collaboration’ (ZA_FC001).

Respondents also spoke of actively lobbying for legal and procedural reforms. In the DRC, one coalition leader sought to revive ‘a law that incriminated tribalism’ and to amend the electoral law ‘to strike off candidates who would use disinformation [or] hate speech during the campaign’ (CG_AC001). In Kenya, one activist suggested lobbying to change the way tech platforms are understood in the electoral process:

Tech companies (...) keep saying they’re ready, and elections prove them wrong (...). We should be engaging them, not just government engaging them, but even civil society (...). Tech platforms have a big role to play. Given that this is proliferated on the platforms and they’re making money off it. (KE_CS001)

This view was echoed by a Senegalese interviewee, who urged stronger state engagement with global companies: ‘Our states must be strong enough to ask these multinationals to

do the right thing and to provide our audiences with quality content (...) and to adapt their platforms to serve our public interest.’ (SN_AC001)

For other interviewees, the more sustainable safeguard lay in public education rather than reactive regulation. In Kenya, ‘digital literacy training is at the very centre of countering disinformation ... to foster critical engagement with online content’ (KE_CS001). A South African respondent linked this to democratic participation: ‘If you’re going to be an eligible voter, you need to (...) know how your phone works. Digital literacy should be part of the curriculum’ (ZA_CS001). In Senegal, a journalism school director argued for ‘media and information education modules’ from an early age (SN_AC001). In the DRC, an academic framed civic education as the long-term solution to weak regulation: ‘It is necessary to broaden electoral education (...) to the treatment of information in today’s world, with sustained investment between cycles so we have a prepared citizen’ (CG_AC001).

Faced with the challenges outlined above, the organisations we talked to engaged, led, or, in some cases, proposed at least six types of responses. While shaped by the specific regulatory and political context of each country, these responses reveal a set of common strategic approaches.

A first category involves (i) *quasi-regulatory monitoring and exposure*, in which coalitions effectively stand in for absent or ineffective regulators. This includes initiatives like Politoscope in the DRC and the IEC-MMA partnership in South Africa. These initiatives use transparency and documentation to create reputational costs for violators and to provide regulators and platforms with actionable evidence.

A second cluster of responses centres on (ii) *advocacy for legal and institutional reform*. In the DRC, some actors called for new provisions in electoral law to ‘strike off candidates who would use disinformation [or] hate speech during the campaign’ (CG_AC001), alongside long-stalled anti-tribalism legislation. In Senegal, legal advocacy focused on securing a national access-to-information law (‘loi sur l’accès à l’information’), seen as a prerequisite for timely and authoritative rebuttals (SN_AC002, SN_CS002).

A third set of responses involves (iii) *strategic neutrality and institutional positioning to avoid political capture*. Recognising that regulators can be partisan, some initiatives chose politically independent hosts. In the DRC, iVerify (a fact-checking and verification platform developed by UNDP and partners) was embedded in the University of Lubumbashi after media and development stakeholders advised against placing it within the CSAC, which was viewed as lacking neutrality (CG_FC002). In South Africa, some actors avoided direct engagement with political parties by working through partner NGOs as conduits, allowing neutral, trusted bodies to mediate interactions with state-linked actors (ZA_ME003).

The fourth category is (iv) *education and resilience-building* as long-horizon regulation. Across contexts, actors saw media and information literacy (MIL) as the most sustainable countermeasure to disinformation. Senegalese journalism schools worked with Africa Check and Article19 to embed MIL in curricula, while TikTok campaigns and community sensitisation targeted youth (SN_CS002, SN_CS004). In the DRC, one organiser described plans for ‘e-citizenship curricula and school-based media literacy’ (CG_AC001). In South Africa, respondents urged that digital literacy ‘should be part of the curriculum’ for eligible voters (ZA_CS001).

Platform engagement and content takedown mechanisms (v) form another common category. Kenyan actors participated in Meta and TikTok's 'trusted partner channels' for content flagging (KE_CS001, KE_CS003), although cooperation often collapsed after elections. Senegalese actors engaged platforms to lobby for algorithm reform and act against repeat offenders (SN_CS002). In the DRC, some groups documented incidents to pressure Facebook into removals (CG_AC002), while in South Africa, advocacy targeted transparency and linguistic inclusivity in moderation (ZA_AC001, ZA_ME003).

A final set of strategies fills enforcement gaps through *partnerships between civil society, media, and official bodies* (vi). In the DRC, the Independent National Electoral Commission (Commission Électorale Nationale Indépendante or CENI in French) collaborated with Internews, a non-partisan media support non-profit, to address false claims about electoral logistics (CG_GV002). In Senegal, co-regulatory arrangements produced election coverage guides in collaboration with the National Audiovisual Regulatory Council (Conseil National de Régulation de l'Audiovisuel, CNRA) and the Council for the Observation of Rules of Ethics and Deontology in the Media (Conseil pour l'Observation des Règles d'Éthique et de Déontologie dans les Médias, CORET) (SN_AC001, SN_CS003). In South Africa, institutional–civil society reporting mechanisms, such as the IEC–MMA partnership, became recognised channels for addressing harmful content (ZA_FC001).

While these strategies are presented here as distinct categories, in practice they overlap. Respondents noted that multi-pronged efforts could only be pursued through coalitions that link diverse actors, leverage complementary capacities, and coordinate responses across sectors. The next section explores how coalitions were formed and maintained.

Coalition-building

Civil society coalition-building during recent elections can be analysed along three dimensions. The first concerns the *degree of integration with formal regulatory structures*. In Senegal, coalitions frequently operated in co-regulatory arrangements with the CNRA/CORET, producing election coverage guides and monitoring outputs that fed directly into official oversight (SN_AC001, SN_CS003). In the DRC, initiatives such as iVerify were embedded in formally recognised institutions like the University of Lubumbashi, and CENI partnered with civil society on information integrity projects (CG_FC002, CG_GV002). By contrast, Kenyan and South African coalitions tended to maintain greater institutional distance, with the latter relying on 'trusted intermediaries' to mediate engagements with the IEC and other state-linked actors.

The second dimension relates to the *durability of coalition structures*. In Senegal and the DRC, several alliances operated between election cycles, sustained by longer-term observation mandates, journalism programmes, or media literacy initiatives. In Kenya and South Africa, collaboration was more often election-triggered and difficult to sustain in periods of lower political salience.

A third differentiating factor is the *scope of international linkages*. Coalitions in the DRC and South Africa often incorporated global technical expertise into their operations (CG_ME003, ZA_AC001), whereas Senegal's networks were more locally anchored, and Kenya's international engagement tended to be channelled through donor-backed

capacity-building programmes. Table A2 in the Online Appendix offers a summary of selected coalitions, and how they map on to these dimensions.

The rest of this section illustrates how coalitions combined diverse actors and activities, from broad-based media alliances and grassroots outreach networks to specialist monitoring units and advocacy platforms, and how these arrangements addressed both the immediate demands of electoral periods and the longer-term challenge of sustaining engagement. Coalitions' operations on the ground reveal how design choices and strategic partnerships shaped their capacity.

One key characteristic of these coalitions is the diversity of actors involved. In Kenya, Baraza Media Lab's Fumbua Initiative brought together fact-checkers, mainstream and community media, influencers, and grassroots organisations in a layered communication model that combined technical verification with audience-specific amplification:

[T]here was a time that fact-checking was very advanced. The first thing that people think about when it comes to mis- and dis-information. But then now, that's not the only thing. There's the need for amplification. Working with fact-checkers and then having people to amplify that but also working with influencers was also very good because of their reach and how easily they break down numbers, how easily they break down information. That also worked very well. Also now, post-election, working with researchers and analysts. (KE_CS003)

Africa Check, one of the continent's largest fact-checking organisations, expanded in 2022 into partnerships with cartoonists, podcasters, and filmmakers. These reflected a recognition that credibility and reach required multiple formats and voices: 'You have all the fact-checkers in one place ... fact-checker A checks [a claim] ... fact-checker B checks the same thing ... the uniformity of findings across fact-checkers was just showing people that actually this thing is false' (KE_FC001). In Senegal, the youth-led initiative Sénégal Vote, created by the association Wa Mbedmi ('grassroots community' in Wolof) partnered with community radio stations such as Oxygen Radio and Zig FM to broadcast in local languages to rural audiences. Outreach priorities were informed by a violence-prevalence mapping developed with another NGO, Gradec, enabling them to focus programming in areas at higher risk of electoral violence (SN_CS002).

Coalitions frequently blended monitoring, capacity-building, and advocacy. In Senegal, for example, *Bulletin des Reporters* mobilised over 500 journalists in a WhatsApp-based verification network, enabling real-time fact-checking through coordinated field visits to hospitals, police stations, and prefectures. Article19 worked closely with the COSCE coalition. Activities included training journalists, bloggers, activists, women candidates, and youth political leaders to identify and resist false information, combined with workshops on ethics, deontology, and the responsibilities of media actors, often delivered in partnership with the Senegalese Election Observation Framework or CORET, from the French, Cadre d'Observation des Élections au Sénégal (SN_CS003). Beyond capacity-building, Article 19 convened dialogues between political parties, regulators, and media representatives to reinforce norms around access to information and responsible speech. Electoral officials from the Autonomous National Electoral Commission (Commission Électorale Nationale Autonome or CENA) also benefited from direct engagement with platforms: 'Meta organises refresher sessions for the main social media users from electoral bodies, civil society, media ... For CENA, we are always represented by our communication officer, IT head, webmaster ...' (SN_GV001).

Other alliances were embedded within established broadcast structures. In the DRC, the Hirondelle Foundation's partnership with Radio Okapi, the UN-backed broadcaster jointly managed with United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), integrated external fact-checkers into election coverage, using its nationwide reach to distribute verified information and counter falsehoods in real time (CG_ME002). Interviewees also pointed to opportunities for extending this broadcast-based approach. One suggestion was to work in synergy with Hirondelle Foundation's wider community-radio network, which includes over 200 stations, to co-produce educational sketches in multiple local languages. 'The idea is to make information accessible to everyone, even those who do not have access to the internet or who do not understand French' (CG_AC001). In another initiative, Internews developed a dual monitoring structure in the DRC. Urban, social-media-driven coalitions for tracking online narratives and community-level monitors for offline rumours, producing weekly bulletins that informed pre-emptive action by the electoral commission (CG_ME002).

Capacity-building remained a core function across all four countries, though the target audiences and delivery methods reflected different strategic priorities. In Kenya, Article 19's coalition worked with community groups to deliver digital literacy workshops, combining verification skills with guidance on platform accountability (KE_CS001). In South Africa, similar skills were extended to the general public, with more than 400 citizens trained to spot and report disinformation (ZA_CS001). In Senegal, COSCE partners focused on politically active groups, training journalists, women candidates, and youth political activists to recognise and resist manipulative narratives:

These are young people who are in political parties, who have unwavering engagement for the party, but if they are not very well informed about certain realities, they can always convey information that is false, that could cause tensions. So, we work with them on the basics: understanding the electoral process, how to verify before sharing, and why avoiding hate speech matters. The idea is that they then take this knowledge back into their parties and communities, so the impact multiplies (SN_CS003).

In the DRC, the Balobaki Check initiative collaborated with journalists and other CSOs to strengthen verification capacity, training 100 journalists and multiple CSOs in fact-checking techniques (CG_FC001).

Sustainability, however, remained a shared concern. In Kenya and South Africa especially, coalitions often emerged in response to electoral urgency and struggled to maintain momentum during quieter political periods:

There's lots of money that comes in an election year, and so you find everybody is running around with projects to counter misinformation (...) But there's very little in the downtime, as if misinformation goes to sleep after the results are announced. It doesn't. It continues throughout and continues mutating, sometimes even more dangerously when no one is really watching. (KE_ME002)

Resource flows mirrored this pattern, with funding surging during campaigns but contracting sharply thereafter, limiting the continuity of both personnel and partnerships. Platform engagement was similarly cyclical, with moderation and capacity-building support from companies such as Meta often diminishing post-election (KE_CS003).

Strategic disagreements, for example, over whether to prioritise punitive legal measures or rights-based advocacy, sometimes slowed decision-making (KE_CS001).

The coalitions that proved most resilient combined capacities in ways that bridged the gap between electoral urgency and inter-election continuity. Some, like Kenya's Fumbua and South Africa's Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) led partnership with civil society, law enforcement, the IEC and others, relied on standing cross-sector forums linking public bodies, civil society organisations, and technical actors to coordinate monitoring, verification, and public communication (KE_CS003; ZA_CS001). Their embeddedness in formal structures gave them legitimacy and a degree of stability, while their broad membership allowed for flexible, rapid responses to emerging narratives. By contrast, Senegal's #SaytuSen2024 initiative (*saytu* meaning 'to verify' in Wolof) operated through grassroots mobilisation and community media to reach constituencies often overlooked by formal alliances.

#Saytu is about making sure that what we put out is based on what we have checked ourselves. We work with community radios, especially in rural areas, to explain in local languages what is happening and to avoid misunderstandings. On social media, especially TikTok, we reach young people in the cities. We also use the mapping of zones where there is a high risk of electoral violence to decide where to focus our efforts. That way, our message is not just general but adapted to the reality on the ground (SN_CS002).

All these variations show that durability can stem either from institutional anchoring or from adaptive, network-based models, but in both cases, the critical factor was the capacity to combine complementary strengths across actors and channels. Where coalitions failed to integrate such diverse capacities, relying instead on donor-driven collaborations, they tended to lose momentum once electoral urgency and funding ebbed, leaving information integrity open to further manipulation.

Discussion

Across the four contexts we studied, stakeholders engaged with regulators and electoral bodies not simply based on their statutory powers, but on judgements about their neutrality, responsiveness, and adaptability. Where these bodies were viewed as politically captured or technologically outpaced, their mandates, however comprehensive on paper, had limited practical force. This moves the conversation beyond the 'presence or absence' of regulation toward what we call the *trust architecture of information governance*: the interplay of perceived independence, procedural transparency, and institutional agility that determines whether rules are acted upon in good faith. This reading is consistent with Tenove's (2020) argument that safeguarding democratic goods requires more than legal authority; it demands credible institutions capable of evolving with the threat environment. It also extends the UN Global Principles for Information Integrity (United Nations, 2024) by underscoring that impartial enforcement is not a technical detail, but a precondition for sustained cooperation between state and non-state actors in electoral contexts.

When that trust architecture is weak or contested, our cases show that the most consequential work of protecting electoral integrity is often performed through adaptive, quasi-regulatory governance. While multi-stakeholder collaboration is often framed in the literature as a complement to robust regulation, our findings suggest that, in

politically captured electoral environments, coalitions operate as a form of de facto governance. They do not merely support formal institutions, but substitute for them by performing monitoring, standard-setting, and accountability functions that would otherwise remain either unfulfilled or poorly served. Civil society organisations, independent media, and sometimes electoral bodies themselves built parallel mechanisms for monitoring, verification, public exposure, and voter education. These were not ad hoc stop-gaps, but structured practices designed to impose reputational costs, feed evidence into advocacy, and pre-empt the spread of harmful content in the absence of timely formal intervention. In doing so, they blurred the conventional divide between ‘regulation’ and ‘participation.’ This pattern complicates global frameworks such as those of the OECD (2024) or UNESCO (2024), which often present multi-stakeholder collaboration as a complement to robust regulation. Our findings suggest that in some contexts, adaptive governance is not supplementary. It is the primary infrastructure for maintaining information integrity.

Our findings also show that coalitions often operate not as loose alliances but as governance infrastructures. By integrating monitoring, fact-checking, outreach, and advocacy within a single operational framework, they developed the capacity to set agendas, broker between stakeholders, and enforce informal accountability norms. In contexts where regulatory legitimacy was uneven, this infrastructural character allowed coalitions to stabilise information governance functions across electoral cycles. This reframes the ‘multi-stakeholder’ and ‘whole-of-society’ principles from a procedural ideal into a model of distributed governance that is anchored in local realities. Our evidence also underscores the value of ‘custom-built’ coalitions (Ong et al., 2020), which integrate capacities and audiences in ways that reflect the political, linguistic, and technological terrain in which they operate.

Durability of these quasi-regulatory frameworks was a key challenge and objective for the coalitions that support them. Coalitions that sustained activity between elections, maintaining monitoring baselines, public visibility, and active partnerships, were better placed to respond rapidly and credibly when electoral periods intensified. Those tied closely to election-cycle funding and temporary alliances often dissipated once the immediate urgency passed, leaving the information space exposed. This finding reinforces Judge and Korhani’s (2020) call for embedding ‘digital information equality’ into democratic processes year-round and aligns with international guidance that stresses prevention and preparedness alongside rapid response. By showing how sustained coalitions preserve institutional memory, trust networks, and operational routines, our study points to durability as a core design criterion for electoral information integrity: one that should sit alongside diversity of participation and reach in both scholarly and policy frameworks.

Conclusion

This study contributes to debates on electoral information integrity by showing that coalition-building and governance of information integrity are mutually constitutive processes. In the absence of robust, impartial state regulation, coalitions take on governance functions. Where frameworks exist but are politicised or selectively enforced, coalitions adapt through strategic neutrality, diversification of partnerships, and a mix of reactive and preventive strategies. By connecting micro-level practices, such as fact-

checking workflows, media literacy training, and platform escalation protocols, to macro-level governance gaps, our findings demonstrate how civil-society coalitions act as intermediary institutions. They embody the ‘whole-of-society’ ethos promoted in global frameworks (Thornton, 2025), but in practice this ethos is operationalised through context-specific adaptations: embedding in universities, co-producing radio content in local languages, mapping misinformation hotspots, or pairing monitoring outputs with targeted legal advocacy.

Theoretically, this points to coalitions as a distinctive form of electoral information governance. They are neither purely voluntary networks nor formal regulatory bodies, but hybrid actors whose legitimacy derives from cross-sectoral representation, independence from political capture, and demonstrable responsiveness to public information needs. Future research should examine how these coalitions evolve between electoral cycles, how their institutional location affects their perceived neutrality and efficacy, how their practices might inform formal regulatory design; and whether they are unique to the four countries we studied or are found in other parts of the world. In an era where information integrity challenges are persistent rather than episodic, the resilience of democratic information environments may depend as much on the durability and adaptability of these coalitions as on the laws and platforms that formally govern them.

Finally, our findings necessarily reflect how information integrity challenges are perceived and acted upon by intermediary actors rather than by citizens themselves. Although interviewees frequently referenced grassroots reactions, from insults and intimidation to electoral fatigue, these perspectives enter our analysis indirectly and should be interpreted as institutional sensemaking rather than direct accounts of voter experience. This intermediary vantage point may also privilege more formalised, organised, and publicly legible interventions, while under-representing informal, contentious, or everyday practices through which citizens navigate and contest electoral information environments. Future research should also directly engage citizens and voters, particularly in rural and semi-urban settings, to examine how coalition-based interventions intersect with everyday information practices, political disengagement, and demands for peaceful electoral participation.

Author contributions

CRedit: **Dani Madrid-Morales:** Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Funding acquisition, Methodology, Project administration, Supervision, Writing – original draft; **Herman Wasserman:** Conceptualization, Funding acquisition, Supervision, Project administration, Writing – review & editing; **Nicola Davies-Laubscher:** Investigation, Methodology, Writing – original draft; **Fatoumata Sow:** Investigation, Methodology, Writing – original draft.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This project was supported by Open Society Foundations [Grant Number OR2023-91027].

Notes on contributors

Dani Madrid-Morales is Lecturer in Journalism and Global Communication at the University of Sheffield (United Kingdom), and a Research Fellow at the Centre for Information Integrity in Africa at Stellenbosch University (South Africa) [email: d.madrid-morales@sheffield.ac.uk].

Herman Wasserman is Professor of Journalism and Director of the Centre for Information Integrity in Africa at Stellenbosch University (South Africa) [email: hwasserman@sun.ac.za].

Nicola Davies-Laubscher holds a PhD in Media Studies from the University of Cape Town. She is currently a postdoctoral research fellow at the Digital Media Sociology Lab at UCT [email: nicola.davies-laubscher@uct.ac.za].

Fatoumata Sow holds a PhD in Communication and Society from the University of Oregon, USA. She teaches communication at the University of Sine Saloum ElHadj Ibrahima Niass in Senegal [email: fatoumatasow@gmail.com].

ORCID

Dani Madrid-Morales  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1522-5857>

Herman Wasserman  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2553-1989>

Nicola Davies-Laubscher  <http://orcid.org/0009-0005-6881-2827>

References

- Borz, G., & De Francesco, F. (2024). Digital political campaigning: Contemporary challenges and regulation. *Policy Studies*, 45(5), 677–691. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01442872.2024.2384145>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. SAGE.
- Breuer, A. (2024). *Information integrity and information pollution*. IDOS Discussion Paper 2/2024.
- Clayton, K., Blair, S., Busam, J. A., Forstner, S., Glance, J., Green, G., Kawata, A., Kovvuri, A., Martin, J., Morgan, E., & Sandhu, M. (2020). Real solutions for fake news? Measuring the effectiveness of general warnings and fact-check tags in reducing belief in false stories on social media. *Political Behavior*, 42(4), 1073–1095. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-019-09533-0>
- Dad, N., & Khan, S. (2023). Reconstructing elections in a digital world. *South African Journal of International Affairs*, 30(3), 473–496. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10220461.2023.2265886>
- de Freitas Melo, P., Vieira, C. C., Garimella, K., de Melo, P. O. V., & Benevenuto, F. (2019). *Can WhatsApp counter misinformation by limiting message forwarding?* (arXiv:1909.08740). arXiv. <https://arxiv.org/abs/1909.08740>
- De Gregorio, G., & Stremlau, N. (2023). Inequalities and content moderation. *Global Policy*, 14(5), 870–879. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gpol.v14.5>
- Donovan, J. (2020). Social-media companies must flatten the curve of misinformation. *Nature*, 580(7802), 590. <https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-020-01107-z>
- Garbe, L., Selvik, L., & Lemaire, P. (2023). How African countries respond to fake news and hate speech. *Information, Communication & Society*, 26(1), 86–103. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2021.1994623>
- Garnett, H. A., & James, T. S. (2020). Cyber elections in the digital age: Threats and opportunities of technology for electoral integrity. *Election Law Journal: Rules, Politics, and Policy*, 19(2), 111–126. <https://doi.org/10.1089/elj.2020.0633>
- Harley, K., & Cooper, R. (2021). Information integrity: Are we there yet? *ACM Computing Surveys*, 54(2), 1–35. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3436817>
- International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA). (2024). *Protecting democratic elections through safeguarding information integrity*. <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/2024-01/protecting-democratic-elections-through-safeguarding-information-integrity.pdf> [2025, 10 April].

- Judge, A., & Korhani, N. (2020). Disinformation, digital information equality, and electoral integrity. *Election Law Journal: Rules, Politics, and Policy*, 19(2), 240–261. <https://doi.org/10.1089/elj.2019.0566>
- Kibarabara, J., & Cheruiyot, D. (2025). Kenya: From a checkered press history to an ever-expanding digital media ecology. In A. K. Schapals, & C. Pentzold (Eds.), *Media compass: A companion to international media landscapes* (pp. 422–431). Wiley.
- Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. SAGE.
- Lewandowsky, S., & van der Linden, S. (2021). Countering misinformation and fake news through inoculation and prebunking. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 32(2), 348–384. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10463283.2021.1876983>
- Madrid-Morales, D., Wasserman, H., Davies-Laubscher, N., & Sow, F. (2025). *Tackling disinformation, information manipulation and interference in four African elections*. MEDIA Project.
- Mare, A. (2020). Internet shutdowns in Africa| State-ordered internet shutdowns and digital authoritarianism in Zimbabwe. *International Journal of Communication*, 14, 4244–4263.
- Mare, A., Mabweazara, H. M., & Moyo, D. (2019). “Fake News” and cyber-propaganda in Sub-Saharan Africa: Recentering the research agenda. *African Journalism Studies*, 40(4), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23743670.2020.1788295>
- Mare, A., & Munoriyarwa, A. (2025). Dis/misinformation, WhatsApp groups, and informal fact-checking practices in Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. In S. Udupa, & H. Wasserman (Eds.), *WhatsApp in the World: Disinformation, Encryption and Extreme Speech* (pp. 204–222). NYU Press.
- Miyandazi, V., & Thuo, L. (2025). Navigating the nexus of elections, technology and democracy amid escalating disinformation and misinformation challenges in Kenya. In R. J. Krotoszynski, A. Koltay, & C. Garden (Eds.), *Disinformation, misinformation, and democracy* (pp. 311–342). Cambridge University Press.
- Mudavadi, K. C., & Madrid-Morales, D. (2025). Countering political disinformation. In S. A. Eldridge, D. Cheruiyot, S. Banjac, & J. Swart (Eds.), *Routledge companion to digital journalism studies* (2nd ed., pp. 450–459). Routledge.
- Mutahi, P., & Kimari, B. (2020). Fake news and the 2017 Kenyan elections. *Communicatio*, 46(4), 31–49. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02500167.2020.1723662>
- Norris, P., Garnett, H. A., & Grömping, M. (2020). The paranoid style of American elections: Explaining perceptions of electoral integrity in an age of populism. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*, 30(1), 105–125. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17457289.2019.1593181>
- Ong, J. C., Lanuza, J. M., Jackson, D., Alves, M., Grohmann, R., Recuero, R., & Tavares, C. (2020). *Custom built / Feito sob medida: Reforming tech & democracy programs for the Global Majority*. Global Technology for Social Justice Lab at UMass Amherst. https://glotechlab.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/GloTech_Custom_Built_Final.pdf. [2026, March 17].
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2024). *Facts not Fakes: Tackling disinformation, strengthening information integrity*. OECD Publishing.
- Pennycook, G., Bear, A., Collins, E. T., & Rand, D. G. (2020). The implied truth effect: Attaching warnings to a subset of fake news stories increases perceived accuracy of stories without warnings. *Management Science*, 66(11), 4944–4957. <https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.2019.3478>
- Phillips, W., & Milner, R. M. (2021). *You are here: A field guide for navigating polarized speech, conspiracy theories, and our polluted media landscape*. MIT Press. doi:10.1287/mnsc.2019.3478
- Roberts, T., & Karekwaivanane, G. H. (Eds.). (2024). *Digital disinformation in Africa: Hashtag politics, power and propaganda*. Bloomsbury.
- Shabbir, N., Posetti, J., & Simon, F. M. (2022). How three mission-driven news organizations in the global south combat disinformation through investigation, innovation, advocacy, and education. In H. Wasserman, & D. Madrid-Morales (Eds.), *Disinformation in the global south* (pp. 193–209). Wiley.
- Simiyu, M. (2022). Freedom of expression and African elections: Mitigating the insidious effect of emerging approaches to addressing the false news threat. *African Human Rights Law Journal*, 22(1), 76–107. <https://doi.org/10.17159/1996-2096/2022/v22n1a4>

- Sivalo, D. M. (2024). An analysis of the role of disinformation in elections: An exploratory study of the Centre for Innovation and Technology's project on combatting electoral disinformation in the August 2023 national and December 2023 by-elections. *African Journal of Inclusive Societies*, 4(1), 50–62. <https://doi.org/10.59186/SI.HY74FJ87>
- Tenove, C. (2020). Protecting democracy from disinformation: Normative threats and policy responses. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 25(3), 517–537. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161220918740>
- Thornton, M. (2025). Resisting disinformation: Theorising whole-of-society and sociotechnical resistance. *European Journal of International Relations*, Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13540661251382639>
- Tully, M. (2025). Responses to misinformation: Examining the Kenyan context. In H. Wasserman, & D. Madrid-Morales (Eds.), *Disinformation in the global south* (pp. 179–192). Wiley.
- Tully, M., Madrid-Morales, D., Wasserman, H., Gondwe, G., & Ireri, K. (2022). Who is responsible for stopping the spread of misinformation? Examining audience perceptions of responsibilities and responses in six sub-Saharan African countries. *Digital Journalism*, 10(5), 679–697. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2021.1965491>
- Tully, M., Vraga, E. K., & Bode, L. (2020). Designing and testing news literacy messages for social media. *Mass Communication and Society*, 23(1), 22–46. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2019.1604970>
- Udupa, S., Gagliardone, I., & Hervik, P. (Eds.). (2021). *Digital hate: The global conjuncture of extreme speech*. Indiana University Press.
- UNESCO (2024). *Mapping the information integrity debate and informing the agenda of the G20*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. <https://www.unesco.org/sites/default/files/medias/fichiers/2025/06/p3-g20-dewg-brasil-2024-mapping-the-information-integrity-debate.pdf> [2026, March 17].
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2023). *Information integrity to sustain peace during electoral processes*. <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-07/undp-information-integrity-to-sustain-peace-during-electoral-processes.pdf> (accessed April 10, 2025).
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2024). *Information integrity for electoral institutions and processes: Reference manual for UNDP practitioners*. https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2024-03/24119_undp_information_integrity_v07_rc_002.pdf [2025, April 10].
- United Nations (UN). (2024). *United Nations global principles for information integrity: Recommendations for multi-stakeholder action*. <https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/un-global-principles-for-information-integrity-en.pdf> [2025, April 10].
- Vaccari, C., & Chadwick, A. (2020). Deepfakes and disinformation: Exploring the impact of synthetic political video on deception, uncertainty, and trust in news. *Social Media + Society*, 6(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305120903408>
- Walter, N., Cohen, J., Holbert, R. L., & Morag, Y. (2020). Fact-checking: A meta-analysis of what works and for whom. *Political Communication*, 37(3), 350–375. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2019.1668894>
- Wefwafwa, J. A. (2025). Vulgarities, vulnerabilities, and vengeance: Gendered intimidation and WhatsApp use in electoral politics in Kenya. *Global Studies Quarterly*, 5(3), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1093/isagsq/ksaf065>
- Wefwafwa, J. A., Wekesa, B., & Gagliardone, I. (2025). Tensions, confrontations, and consensus: WhatsApp use in Kenyan electoral politics. *Social Media + Society*, 11(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051251315252>