WHO IS BEHIND COVID-19 DISINFORMATION/MISINFORMATION IN AFRICA?
DISINFORMATION vs. MISINFORMATION?

DISINFORMATION: False information which is intended to mislead, especially propaganda issued by a government to a rival power or the media.

MISINFORMATION: False information that is spread, regardless of whether there is an intent to mislead. Frequently commercially motivated.
WHO IS SPREADING DISINFORMATION AND WHY?

Russia
- Wants to undermine public trust in Western countries, sow panic, breed distrust. [https://tinyurl.com/yx42jzyh](https://tinyurl.com/yx42jzyh)

China
- Is trying to rewrite the history of its handling of COVID-19. Focus on efforts to stem the disease, provide aid, instead of as the originator of the virus. [https://tinyurl.com/y8qw7d52](https://tinyurl.com/y8qw7d52)

Iran
- Seek lifting of economic sanctions
STATE-SPONSORED DISINFORMATION CAMPAIGN OBJECTIVES

GOAL:

TO TAKE THE ROLE OF GLOBAL "SAVIOR" AND VICTOR OVER THE PANDEMIC, "COUNTRY THAT HAS CAPTIVATED CRISIS."

METHOD:
MEDIA MANIPULATION

GOAL:

- SOW DISCORD AT A TIME OF HEIGHTENED TENSIONS
- HEIGHTEN CORONAVIRUS PANIC IN THE E.U. AND THE UNITED STATES

METHOD:
FAKE STORIES AND ALARMIST MESSAGES
TYPES OF DISINFORMATION DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC:

- Conspiracies
- Fake stories
- Sensational news
- Misleading medical advice
- Information influence campaigns
- Statistical manipulation
WHY TARGET AFRICA?

Overall Goal:

1. Damage Relations with the West
2. Question motives for vaccines, health care
3. Exploit Lack of Scientific information

Russia: Expand influence in key countries

China: Prevent a backlash that hurts economic ties
Facebook Shuts Russian Disinformation Networks Targeting Africa With New Tactics
Coronavirus ends China's honeymoon in Africa

Beijing has spent billions to win friends and influence politics in Africa. But the virus is threatening to upend years of careful work.

By SIMON MARKS | 4/17/20, 2:11 AM CET | Updated 4/17/20, 9:47 AM CET

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia — Africa was supposed to be China's new stomping grounds. Instead, the novel coronavirus has spawned a growing backlash that threatens to unwind the ties Beijing has carefully cultivated over decades.
Efforts to Contain Coronavirus Spread in Africa Undermined by Misinformation

by Philip Obaji Jr.

With 11,000 cumulative cases confirmed in Africa as of today, the novel coronavirus pandemic is expanding across the continent. It may only be a matter of time before the number of cases begins to resemble that of Europe, or even the United States.

As the number of infections and deaths grow daily, so also does public anxiety, particularly in rural areas where primary health care is often lacking. The continent, just like the rest of the world, is struggling to contain the spread of the virus. But the problem is made worse by a familiar enemy during pandemics: misinformation.
MISINFORMATION FOR PROFIT AND GAIN

Fake Cures and Treatments

1. Natural remedies, saunas, vodka can cure the disease.
2. Promoting untested drugs as a cure.
3. Blue masks are made in the West and contaminated with toxins.
4. Panic buying, phishing attacks.
Coronavirus: What misinformation has spread in Africa?

By Reality Check team
BBC News

24 April 2020

Steam from hot water is not yet proven to kill the virus

African countries are experiencing a rise in the number of new coronavirus cases, and many governments have been enforcing strict social distancing measures.

As they prepare for a surge in cases, misleading information has been spreading throughout the continent.

1. Inhaling very hot steam is dangerous

The false claim that inhaling steam is an effective treatment against coronavirus
WHY DOES FAKE NEWS FLOURISH IN AFRICA?

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<td>1.</td>
<td>Distrust of Government (often with good reason)</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Economic challenges in the time of COVID</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Rapid Spread of Social Media, particularly What’s App</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Unknowns about the virus</td>
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Arrests mount as Africa battles a death toll of 19 disinfection

GEOFFREY YORK > AFRICA BUREAU CHIEF
JOHANNESBURG
PUBLISHED APRIL 7, 2020

3 COMMENTS  SHARE

People participate in a public fitness program on a pedestrian bridge in Abuja, Nigeria, despite a 14-day lockdown and physical distancing instructions, on April 7, 2020.
HOW TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM OF DISINFORMATION?

The Media’s Role in Fighting the Scourge

1. Public Education: Engaging the Community
2. Media Literacy for All: Distinguish fake from real
3. Exposing Disinformation
4. Stop Passing Disinformation.
SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS RESPOND
USEFUL FACT-CHECKING SITES

- First Draft News (www.firstdraftnews.org)
- The Week in Fact-Checking (www.Poynter.org)
- Factcheckingday.com (https://factcheckingday.com)
- Facebook (Coronavirus Information Center)
- Twitter (#Covid19)
- The News Literacy Project (www.newslit.org)
- Snopes (www.snopes.com)
WHAT CAN YOU DO NOW?

1. Rely on verified information and reputable websites
2. Question statistics, models and polls
3. Call the experts. Get differing views
4. Stop feeding clickbait
To inform, engage & connect people around the world in support of freedom and democracy.