

Fact-Checking and Ethical Reporting Workshop for Ethiopian Journalists
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Best Western Hotel, Addis Ababa

Background

Journalism plays a crucial role in informing and shaping public opinion in Ethiopia. However, in recent years, the [proliferation](#) of misinformation and disinformation has become a significant challenge. This surge in disinformation is undermining social cohesion, promoting [conflict](#), and leading to a concerning number of threats against journalists and human rights defenders. Moreover, this phenomenon undermines the credibility of journalism and erodes public trust in media institutions. Accordingly, conducting fact-checking training for Ethiopian journalists is crucial to safeguard the integrity and reliability of journalism in the country.

On the other hand, media freedom and press ethics face particular challenges in Ethiopia, which makes the practice of ethical reporting crucial for the credibility and effectiveness of journalism in serving the public interest and fostering a healthy democratic society. Whereas some journalists in the country have undergone [training](#), including by CIPESA, in understanding disinformation and hate speech, they largely lack practical skills in conducting fact-checking and in ethical reporting.

Training Outcomes

By equipping Ethiopian journalists with the skills to verify information and combat disinformation, and to undertake ethical reporting, this CIPESA-organised workshop will foster a media landscape that serves the public interest and upholds democratic values. The workshop will also contribute to fighting disinformation and its harms, and thus contribute to a healthier information ecosystem and a safer Ethiopian society.

The Need for Fact-Checking Training

Ethiopia is grappling with the spread of dis/misinformation through various mediums, including social media platforms. False narratives and misleading information often lead to confusion, mistrust, and even social unrest. By equipping journalists with fact-checking skills, they can serve as gatekeepers of truth, effectively countering misinformation and ensuring that accurate information reaches the public.

The fact-checking training will help Ethiopian journalists to bolster their credibility: By consistently delivering accurate and verified information, journalists can differentiate themselves from unreliable sources and earn the trust of their audience. This, in turn, fosters a healthier media ecosystem where quality journalism thrives. Furthermore, fact-checking training empowers journalists to identify and debunk fake news effectively. By providing the public with verified information, journalists can mitigate the impact of fake news and prevent its harmful consequences. In Ethiopia, disinformation has real-world [consequences](#) that are sometimes severe, including the loss of life and large-scale violent events. Fact-checking training ensures that journalists can fulfil their role as watchdogs of democracy by holding those in power accountable and providing citizens with accurate information to make informed choices. By promoting transparency and accountability, fact-checked journalism contributes to a vibrant and robust democratic discourse.

The Need for Ethical Reporting Training

Journalists have a responsibility to uphold ethical standards in their reporting. Fact-checking training instils a commitment to establish truth as well as accuracy, fairness, and impartiality, which are key tenets of journalistic ethics. It encourages them to verify information from multiple sources before disseminating it to the public. By adhering to these principles, journalists can maintain the integrity

of their profession and contribute to a more informed society. The ethical principles that will be at the centre of the training, in as far as they relate to disinformation and hate speech in Ethiopia, are:

1. *Accuracy*: Ethical reporting ensures that information presented to the public is accurate and factually correct. Journalists have a responsibility to verify information before publishing it, to maintain credibility and trust.
2. *Fairness and Balance*: Ethical reporting requires journalists to present information in a fair and balanced manner, providing multiple perspectives on a story. This helps avoid bias and ensures that readers or viewers receive a comprehensive understanding of the issues.
3. *Respect for Privacy and Dignity*: Journalists must respect the privacy and dignity of individuals mentioned in their reporting. This includes obtaining consent before using personal information and avoiding sensationalism or exploitation.
4. *Avoiding Harm*: Ethical reporting aims to minimise harm to individuals or communities mentioned in the news. Journalists should consider the potential consequences of their reporting and take steps to mitigate any negative impact, particularly in conflict-affected and multi-ethnic communities where hate speech can lead to dire real-world harms.
5. *Accountability*: Ethical reporting holds journalists accountable for their work. By adhering to ethical standards, journalists demonstrate their commitment to serving the public interest and upholding the integrity of the profession.
6. *Building Trust*: Trust is essential in journalism. Ethical reporting helps build and maintain trust between journalists and their audience. When people trust the media to provide accurate and unbiased information, they are more likely to engage with news content and make informed decisions.
7. *Legal Compliance*: Ethical reporting often aligns with legal requirements for journalism, such as defamation laws and regulations regarding privacy, or, in Ethiopia's case, the Hate Speech and Disinformation Proclamation of 2020. By following ethical guidelines, journalists can avoid legal repercussions and protect themselves and their organisations from lawsuits.

Participants

The workshop will bring together 20 editors, journalists and bloggers from Ethiopian media houses (print, broadcast, digital), of whom at least 40% will be female.