



ANCHOR CHANGE

Election Coalitions Playbook



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Foreword

In 2024, more than two billion people across more than 50 countries, almost half the world's population, will vote in elections. These elections will require the energy and dedication of millions of people to uphold the right to vote. These individuals run polling stations, knock on doors, hold election debates, and much more. Each small or big contribution adds to the overall effort to protect democracy.

Each election will play out in its own unique political, legislative and technological context. For example, voting may be compulsory in one country and not another. Electoral bodies may have varying levels of digital competency. The information ecosystems can vary greatly across countries.

Some countries may rely heavily on public broadcasting, while others rely on social influencers and communities for election information. Some countries may have rules in place to protect voters from harmful election fraud, while others may not, or to a lesser extent. There may be greater press freedoms in one country than in another. All of these subtle, and sometimes not-so-subtle nuances mean that there is no panacea to combating misinformation during an election.

This is why country-led election coalitions are a powerful tool for combating misinformation. By bringing together news organizations, fact checkers, and community groups from within each

country, coalitions can work together to serve the voters of each country in a way that meets their specific needs in the run-up to an election.

Election coalitions are especially good at sharing resources and insights. By working together to identify the claims that are causing the most harm, and by amplifying the impact of each individual organization's efforts to debunk it, election coalitions can serve millions of voters at a time when they most need reliable information.

This playbook is the culmination of a six-month research project involving interviews with fifteen global experts. The authors sought to glean insights and identify best practices from some of the most successful election coalitions from the past decade. Their findings show there is no one-size-fits-all approach to creating an election coalition to combat misinformation during an election. But there are some common themes, questions, approaches, and ideas that all successful coalitions share.

This playbook will help ask the right questions to build the best coalition possible. More importantly, it will help you serve millions of voters with the best information available at a vital time in support of democracy.



Mevan Babakar

*News and Information Credibility Lead,
Google News Initiative*

Introduction

Over the past decade, journalists, fact-checkers, and civil society members have formed impactful election coalitions - joining forces to counter dis- and misinformation and help protect the integrity of democratic processes.

In France, CrossCheck 2017 brought together over 30 media organizations and published collaborative fact-checks of viral misinformation material related to the French elections. Most recently, the Nigerian Fact-checkers Coalition's work positively impacted the veracity of politicians' public messaging. When making statements, politicians would say "Go and verify!" to stress they were not misinforming the electorate.

Election coalitions thus help counter misinformation, encourage fact-based political messaging, and foster an informed electorate that is essential for democracy to thrive. By safeguarding the accuracy of public discourse through fact checking, election coalitions help citizens to make informed voting choices, thereby protecting the integrity of electoral processes. Election coalitions increase public trust and safeguard fundamental democratic rights.

Election coalitions check thousands of statements, claims and tips. For example,

in the case of Comprova in Brazil, 78,462 files were received through the coalition's WhatsApp channel alone. Out of these, 1,750 original fact-checked reports were published by coalition members via their respective channels, and 146 were published on the coalition website. CrossCheck reported 67 collaborative reports in 2017 while the Nigerian Fact-checkers Coalition reported 127 fact-checks during the 2023 elections.

This Playbook, consisting of practical tips and lessons learned, is a resource for organizations and individuals who want to establish or participate in an election coalition. It was developed through engagement with a number of leading election coalitions, capturing their lessons learned and best practices.

¹Peter Obi Sends Jitters To Gov Diri, Takes 'GO & VERIFY' Campaign To Bayelsa Ahead of Guber Election (2023, Sep 25). SYMFONI. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VeyDgOs85Is>

Election Coalition Formation

Election coalitions are complex entities shaped by a range of factors, including socio-political landscape, social dynamics, cultural background, and media landscape of the country where they operate. Election coalition formation should follow a specific set of steps to maximize effectiveness.

1.1 Identify the need

Coalition formation generally begins with the recognition of a pressing need—primarily the imperative to combat dis- and misinformation during an election period. Once an organization identifies the need they initiate the establishment of an election coalition. These facilitator organizations ideally carry out a comprehensive examination of the civic, media, and socio-political environment, including which organizations are working to support electoral integrity and counter dis- and misinformation.

Tip

Elections are scheduled events. It is never too early to set-up an election coalition, with coalitions set-up anywhere from four months to two years before elections. Once you identify active election disinformation campaigns, consider gathering media, fact-checking and civic organizations to discuss the set-up of a coalition focused on the upcoming elections. If a certain type of coalition already exists in your country, they are a quicker candidate to establish a coalition with a focus on elections.

1.2 Identify the lead

The **facilitator** identifies a potential local **lead organization** that can organize and manage the coalition during the specific electoral cycle. Like the **facilitator**, the **lead organization** should ideally be seen as neutral and is highly regarded in its operating country. They maintain strong credibility and are generally well-accepted, especially by potential coalition members, particularly media organizations. Once this **lead organization** is identified, and commits to taking the role, they move to the next steps such as set-up, membership, training and key operational policies with support from the **facilitator**.

Tip

Consider a lead organization that is respected and well-known by local media. This could be a prominent media entity or a media organization with membership of leading media entities.

1.3 Determine membership

The **lead organization** works to develop a list of potential coalition members, who they then approach in order to propose their participation. Membership in election coalitions varies by structure, prerequisites, and governance across different countries. Media organizations are frequently members of election coalitions. Some coalitions include members from civic organizations such as lawyer's associations, researchers and subject matter experts such as on climate, migration and other topics.

Tip

Countering election misinformation is all about information verification and amplification. Consider including members who are able to perform verification work and building a membership network that can commit to amplify coalition reports.

1.4 Implement Capacity Building program

Train election coalition members to be able to operate with equally the same level of skills and orientation in order to ensure effectiveness of the coalition. Training includes solidarity-building activities which strengthens rapport in addition to skills-based training which ensures effective implementation of countering dis- and misinformation campaigns.

1.4.1 Conduct trust-building activities

Trust-building takes place formally and informally. This includes unstructured field activities or structured team-building workshops. Trust-building is also integrated into daily coalition operations. A climate of trust encourages open relationships, shared resources, and coordinated strategies. This is especially important for coalitions with multiple, often competing, media organizations.

Tip

In-person, trust-building exercises strengthen member relationships and positively reinforce policy agreements, such as consensus decision making. Trust among coalition members facilitates open dialogue and discussion.

1.4.2 Countering misinformation tools and techniques training

The facilitator, lead or subject-matter expert members provide training on fact-checking tools and techniques that support efforts to counter misinformation. This ensures that coalition member capabilities are more even. Fact-checking involves examining the accuracy of specific pieces of information that are already in the public domain.

Tip

Over time, recurring misinformation themes during elections allow preemptive identification of potential false narratives. This enables coalitions to preventively develop operational approaches to address dis- and misinformation.

Tip

Speed is the main challenge in countering misinformation. Choose tools, techniques and membership set-ups that will speed-up fact-checking processes.

1.4.3 Conduct legal orientation

Legal capacity building, the set-up of a legal team, or an orientation of the legal landscape in the country of operation is essential for election coalitions. Legal orientation training prepares coalition members for the current legal forms of coercion that journalists may face in a given country. In some environments, the media is harassed or targeted due to their fact-checking efforts.

Tip

Inclusion of legal expertise organizations in coalitions, in addition to providing legal orientation training, provides support for fact-checking narratives that have some legal context.

1.5 Develop clear coalition policies

Policies establish a common ground among members by setting forth rules, standards, and guidelines that help align various actors towards the coalition's objectives. They promote transparency, provide a structural framework that guides day-to-day operations, and serve as mechanisms for accountability.

1.5.1 Identify coalition approach

There are two predominant election coalition models to date: **collaborative** and **independent**. The decision of which model to use, will depend on member preferences and local context.

a. Collaborative Approach. Members agree to collaboratively fact-check a report together, produce a single report and amplify the product through the memberships of the coalition. A set of editors are determined to review the report; members amplify the report in its original final output.

b. Independent Approach. Members independently conduct the fact-checking process using their own process. The product is shared among the members but there is no specific commitment from the members to amplify the content in their channels. If the coalition has a common channel, the content is published there with a specific note on the organization who conducted the fact-check.

Tip

Coalitions are strongly encouraged to adopt the **collaborative model** to maximize coalition expertise, capacity and reach.

Tip

Clearly define roles and responsibilities. Consider parameters that are relevant to your coalition model. Establish agreements outlining coordination of operational processes, formation of the editorial board, and necessary layers of verification to ensure smooth collaboration and effective fact-checking.

1.5.2 Define roles and responsibilities

Election coalitions have several key actors during its formation and operation, namely: facilitator, lead and members. The members are editors, reporters (fact-checkers), and amplifiers. Such roles should be clearly articulated and agreed upon.

1.5.3 Brand the coalition

Branding is complex, yet crucial for election coalitions. It is essential that members discuss and align on comfort levels with brand associations or brand representations. Specific branding agreements must also be taken into account to respect not only the coalition's specific objectives, but also to respect member's preferences, especially if shared coalition branding would affect their reputation. Partner logos are only published with mutual agreement in place, reflecting the level of respect and recognition each brand receives as part of these collaborations.

Tip

Pay close attention to branding. Negotiate branding approaches early in the formation stage and openly debate parameters to align member organization policies and coalition goals.

Tip

Establish and formally document agreed-upon processes. Having clear agreements, particularly written operational guidelines, is crucial for ensuring coalition efficiency and success.

1.5.4 Formalize operational agreements

A clear code of ethics or standards is necessary to guide the coalition's work. This can come in the form of a charter, a code or a Memorandum of Agreement, whichever is most acceptable to the members. The agreement anchors the coalition, providing a common reference point that can help maintain trust and collaboration among the members. It outlines the shared values, principles, and guidelines that guide coalition activities, ensuring that there's common ground for interpreting the nuances of information verification, source reliability, and public dissemination.

Tip

Develop coalition policy on correcting misinformation in published coalition reports and in member's respective media channels.

Tip

Document learnings. Election coalitions can sometimes be a race to the finish line. Do not miss the opportunity to capture impact, best practices and lessons learned. They are extremely valuable in future elections and for other coalitions.

1.5.5 Commit to quality

Election coalitions are fundamentally committed to upholding truthfulness, a principle that is vital in maintaining credibility and strengthening public trust.

1.6 Create an evaluation strategy

Election coalitions are encouraged to implement mid-term and end-term evaluations to measure coalition outcomes and impacts, specifically in the context of improving electoral integrity and civic engagement.

Tip

Refer to the coalition's evaluation and documentation in developing sustainability strategies for the coalition. Capitalize on the strengths and subject-matter expertise of the members to invest on countering misinformation initiatives.

1.7 Strategize for sustainability

Elections are cyclical, yet the impact of mis- and disinformation extends well beyond election day, persisting in the public sphere and influencing citizens' perceptions. The coalition's efforts are crucial, not just during election periods, but also in the post-electoral period, to ensure that the public remains accurately informed about ongoing developments. It is important to counter false narratives deeply embedded within the socio-political landscape, as these can significantly sway future elections. Some disinformation campaigns are strategically launched years in advance of elections, deliberately looking into enduring false narratives is a proactive approach to combat election misinformation.

AI and emerging trends in fabricated content

AI content generation leveraging deepfake models, text generators, and image manipulation tools has become more sophisticated. This can enable the generation of deceptive information that can be difficult to discern from authentic content. These developments present a new challenge to election coalitions and require collaborative efforts and advanced tools to detect and verify information that uses AI technology.

2.1 Complement existing tools with AI tools

Organizations such as Full Fact and Meedan have developed tools for analyzing reported false content. Complementing existing analysis tools with AI tools or technology will help advance fact-checking and verification processes.

2.2 Develop localized tools

Some coalitions aim to develop localized tools to address language and local context. This will help accelerate verification processes and help address nuanced narratives based on the country's current socio-political context.

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Election coalitions studies

Coalition	Description
CrossCheck ▶	CrossCheck is a collaborative election coalition that was launched in France before the 2017 French presidential election. It is the first French election coalition where major news outfits came and worked together to jointly publish a fact-checked report.
Comprova ▶	Comprova is a collaborative election coalition created to counter dis- and misinformation during the critical period of the 2018 Brazilian elections. Comprova's work proved to be highly impactful, reaching a significant number of Brazilians and contributing to the culture of fact-checking in Brazilian newsrooms.
Objectif Désinfox ▶	A coalition borne out of the 2017 CrossCheck in France. It aimed to address dis- and misinformation campaigns during the French elections in 2019. Its independent approach showcased diversity in fact-checking processes.
Verificado ▶	A collaborative project launched during the 2018 Mexican general elections. The goal was to combat dis- and misinformation, providing the public with reliable and accurate data about the candidates, their proposals, and the electoral process.
Reverso ▶	Reverso was established in 2019 to counter dis- and misinformation surrounding the country's presidential elections. Reverso has a very strong commitment to quality and ensures that members amplify final fact-checked reports in its original output.
#FactsFirstPH ▶	A cooperation of more than a hundred organizations in the Philippines. They were established to counter dis- and misinformation during the 2022 Philippine presidential elections and addressed historical distortion of facts and active disinformation campaigns. #FactsFirstPH highlights it is never too early to set-up a coalition aimed at addressing dis- and misinformation during elections as some disinformation campaigns focused on historical narratives and must be addressed as early as possible.
Nigerian Fact-Checkers' Coalition ▶	A collaborative election coalition established by three IFCN certified organizations in Nigeria. NFC takes pride in their impact as some candidates would say "Google and verify" which reflects the high level of influence the coalition's work had during the Nigerian elections.

CrossCheck, France

First Draft organized CrossCheck in 2017, brought together over 30 organizations² to address misleading content leading up to the French elections. Agence France Presse (AFP) took on editorial leadership. Support was provided by Google News Lab and Facebook.

Formation and Organization

In 2017, First Draft, supported by the Google News Initiative, and in collaboration with media outlets from France and UK, facilitated the establishment of CrossCheck, engaging more than 30 media organizations including well-known media outlets like AFP (Agence France-Presse), BuzzFeed News, France 24, France Télévisions, Ouest France, Libération, and Le Monde. Members of CrossCheck shared a common goal: to ensure that the information disseminated during the electoral phase was trustworthy and accurate.

Organizing CrossCheck involved multiple partners, with AFP as editor of the final content. There was a system of shared responsibilities and collaborative work across different organizations. Participation in CrossCheck helped some members mature their fact-checking skills and establish more robust fact-checking units within their own media networks.

“This is for us one of the biggest wins in AFP history. CrossCheck will always be very special, personally. Sometimes I meet colleagues who took part in this project: do you remember CrossCheck? That was so great!”

Grégoire Lemarchand,
Chief Editor Digital Verification and Deputy
Global Editor-in-Chief, AFP

“The fact of having this coalition with a diverse set of newsrooms actually really helped to regain some trust, which was and is still, I think, a big issue in the media landscape at the moment. So I think this was major.”

Marie Bohner,
Head of Development and
Partnerships, Digital Investigation,
AFP

“The idea by which CrossCheck was formed is that you had different newsrooms doing the verification work but then checking each other’s verification and then publishing and amplifying collectively.”

Claire Wardle,
First Draft

²<https://medium.com/centerforcooperativemedia/collaborative-journalism-summit-projects-to-fight-disinformation-in-elections-popping-up-all-over-890c03130bd2>

Operations and Strategies

In line with accepted fact-checking principles, Crosscheck focused on assessing information that was already circulating and going viral online.

Step-by-step breakdown of the process from identifying content of concern to final reporting:

1. Monitoring. There were two primary methods for identifying content that needed to be fact-checked. Members of the public could submit requests for fact-checking via an online form, and participating journalists and students conducted manual online monitoring.

2. Verification and Checking. Once potentially false information was identified, coalition members would then carry out traditional fact checking, verifying the information, and identifying traps.

3. Collaborative Fact-checking. About 30 media organizations were involved in the project, contributing to and learning from each other's fact-checking efforts.

4. Publishing. Collaborative consensus outputs were published on the CrossCheck website and also in the coalition member's own channel.

5. Promotion. Fact checking outputs were promoted through the various media partners involved in the project, such as republishing or reposting via their social media accounts.

While AFP was in charge of the final edit, the process involved a high degree of collaboration and discussion among the coalition partners. This included discussions on what stories to fact-check. The team building processes put in place as part of the formation of the coalition fostered an environment of constructive debate, ensuring coalition member input was encouraged throughout.

“Sometimes everyone agrees in a minute, sometimes there is a debate and at the end there are a majority of people saying no, or a majority of people saying yes. So that was something collective.”

Grégoire Lemarchand,
Chief Editor Digital Verification
and Deputy Global Editor-in-
Chief, AFP

Impact and Success

Coalition participation fostered a robust fact-checking culture within the participating newsrooms. Notably, AFP, which did not previously possess a fact-checking unit, established and maintained one in the wake of CrossCheck. Participation in the coalition was pivotal for the development and expansion of AFP's fact-checking, representing a major positive outcome of the coalition. This unit now consists of a team of 141 journalists across every continent.

CrossCheck served as a catalyst for subsequent fact-checking endeavors beyond the project's specific duration. The coalition demonstrated its effectiveness and wide reach during the election cycle, including by not missing any major stories. The active collaboration and consensus outputs from diverse newsrooms - ranging from local to national - increased public trust in elections-related messaging.

“Because there was this collaboration and this common result, there was an increase in trust in the results of the project.”

Marie Bohner,
Head of Development and
Partnerships, Digital Investigation,
AFP

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Partners

100's

of articles and social media
posts related to the
presidential campaign

590,443

unique website page views

The CrossCheck page
on Facebook had over

1.2 million

video views in total

Challenges and Lessons Learned

While it is likely that coalition participants will be familiar with fact-checking work prior to participation, this is not always the case, or at least levels of expertise may be uneven. Therefore it is important to support capacity development across the coalition membership. For example, most of the participating French media channels forming CrossCheck did not have a strong background in fact-checking work when they joined the coalition. Only three participating media organizations had fact-checking units in their newsrooms. Members who did not have fact-checking skills developed their fact-checking capabilities, and learned tools and techniques, as part of the coalition formation.

“Politicians, six to seven years ago, were blatantly lying and it was easy to debunk them but now, they are mixing true and false stuff, putting some opinion inside, which is becoming much more tricky to debunk.”

Grégoire Lemarchand,
Chief Editor Digital Verification
and Deputy Global Editor-in-
Chief, AFP

The importance of time for planning and early preparation was another key lesson learned. Similar initiatives would benefit from initiating planning a year ahead of election day. This would allow for more comprehensive organizing, greater skill development, time to bring partners to the coalition, and stronger design of coalition processes.

Advice for Future Coalitions

- 1. Anticipate and prepare early.** Emphasize the importance of anticipation and early preparation. Initiating coalition planning and design at least a year before the election can help build success.
- 2. Build a broad and diverse coalition.** An ambitious early effort to bring a broad and diverse range of coalition members to the table will result in stronger overall outcomes.
- 3. Be ambitious.** Coalitions should not shy away from addressing the most significant stories or themes, as they are the ones that can have the most harmful impact if not debunked effectively.
- 4. Maximize Collaboration.** CrossCheck demonstrated the value of a collaborative coalition approach, through coordinating fact-checking work and delivering shared messages.
- 5. If expanding, focus on specific themes.** If coalitions intend to continue their work beyond the election period, they might want to focus on specific themes, such as climate change, migration or the specific relevant topic for the country or community where they operate. Taking such a targeted approach may increase credibility and make their work more relevant and impactful.

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Interviewees

Grégoire Lemarchand, Chief Editor Digital Verification and Deputy Global Editor-in-Chief, AFP

Marie Bohner, Head of Development and Partnerships, Digital Investigation, AFP

Claire Wardle, First Draft



Comprova, Brazil

In the lead-up to the 2018 Brazilian presidential elections, more than 24 Brazilian media organizations came together to form Comprova with support from First Draft, Google News Initiative and Facebook, in an effort to address election misinformation and bolster trust in accurate news sources.

Formation and Organization

Initially, a number of media outlets were specifically invited to participate in the project, with the selection process conducted by First Draft, with inputs from Google News Initiative and other media participants in Brazil. 24 media organizations joined the coalition. The Brazilian Association of Investigative Journalism (ABRAJI) was invited to coordinate the coalition, being seen as a neutral voice in Brazil. ABRAJI followed a consensus process to admit new members.

Comprova eventually grew from the original 24 media outlets to 41 members, representing different regions of Brazil. The coalition did not exclusively consist of media organizations. It included a range of civil society organizations bringing additional insights, reach and impact. Members saw value in Comprova beyond elections and agreed to continue its work beyond the 2018 elections. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Comprova played an essential role in debunking widespread rumors and misinformation about false cures and vaccines.

“In 2018, in Brazil, our political context at that time was very marked by misinformation. We were very worried about the impact of misinformation during the election campaign.”

Daniel Bramatti,
President of ABRAJI (2019-2018)
and Editor of Estadão Verifica

“Basically [new members join] by invitation, or a news outlet can ask to enter Comprova and there is a vote. And basically, we at Comprova, we try to reach consensus in all decisions, and if there is no veto to a news organization, it can enter the project.”

Daniel Bramatti,
President of ABRAJI (2019-2018)
and Editor of Estadão Verifica

Operations and Strategies

Comprova organized its coalition using a “collaborative approach,” by which members agree to collaboratively fact-check reports, produce a single joint report and amplify their shared conclusions through member reporting.

In practice, the fact-checking process is conducted by a group of coalition members, with a second level of verification conducted by all the members that were not part of the fact-checking process. Then the Comprova Leaders Group, consisting of editors independent from the coalition members, edits the final report, before members publish and amplify it.

Comprova only fact-checks user-generated content on social media, rather than direct statements from political candidates.

Step-by-step breakdown of the process from identifying content of concern to final reporting:

- 1. Selection of Content.** Comprova conducts online monitoring of false narratives circulating on social media and as reported through the coalition WhatsApp channel. The coalition decides which reportedly false content to fact-check based on the content’s reach and engagement.
- 2. Collaborative Fact-Checking.** Once a piece of content has been selected, reporters from different news outlets collaborate on the fact-checking process.
- 3. Cross-Checking and Editing.** After a report is generated by the fact-checking team, the Comprova Leaders Group, working with the membership, edits and cross-checks it, suggesting changes or edits. Consensus is sought for a final decision on the findings and whether or not to publish the report.
- 4. Publishing.** Once the fact-check has passed the cross-checking stage, it is published by Comprova and amplified through member’s respective channels.

“Comprova was this kind of collaboration that is great in the election times, but it can work even when there are no votes disputes. In the second year, we targeted rumors about public policies, about what the government is doing, and in our third year, we were focused on municipal elections. Then came the pandemic, Comprova was essential during the pandemics here because we could debunk many rumors about false cures to COVID and misinformation about vaccines. So the impact was very palpable.”

Daniel Bramatti,
President of ABRAJI (2019-2018)
and Editor of Estadão Verifica

Impact and Success

A lack of brand recognition and trust can be a challenge for election coalitions, but Comprova's high quality output contributed to voter awareness of the coalition, with 25% of voters recognizing the coalition name in a post-election survey.³

Comprova helped develop a fact-checking culture in the Brazilian media, encouraging a more rigorous verification process in newsrooms before publishing, thereby enhancing the credibility of news across the country.

“Each verification that we publish is [assessed] by 10-12 journalists. So we have [achieved] zero-error. With our process, we can reach this goal.”

Sérgio Lüdtke,
Comprova Executive Director

“In the last five years we trained hundreds of journalists and the feedback we have is amazing. People say to us that I am now a better professional because of Comprova.”

Daniel Bramatti,
President of ABRAJI (2019-2018) and
Editor of Estadão Verifica

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Partners

78,462

files were received through the coalition's WhatsApp channel

1,750

original articles were published by coalition members

From August 6 to October 31, the campaigns reached nearly

6.9 million

³Comprova: An Evaluation of the Impact of a Collaborative Journalism Project on Brazilian Journalists and Audiences (2019, June 27). First Draft. Retrieved from <https://firstdraftnews.org/articles/comprova-an-evaluation-of-the-impact-of-a-collaborative-journalism-project-on-brazilian-journalists-and-audiences/>

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Fact-checking bandwidth and journalist safety were the two major challenges Comprova faced as part of its work.

The collaborative approach requires significant time, with cross-checking across members making for a slower fact-checking process. This methodical, collaborative approach makes it harder to debunk a viral false narrative quickly.

In order to enhance the safety of journalists, Comprova decided to publish fact-checked reports under the coalition name. With no bylines, individual journalists could not be tied to particular reporting and potentially be targeted.

One of the main lessons learned by Comprova was the importance of anticipating potential misinformation. Pre-bunking wasn't a term used in 2018, but the idea had already occurred to the Comprova team.

Advice for Future Coalitions

1. Emphasize shared goals over competition. Coalitions should not worry about exclusivity or scoops, but rather concentrate on the overall impact of their work. This reflects a commitment to quality and emphasizes the value of a thorough process over speed of reporting.

2. Anticipate potential misinformation scenarios. Anticipating likely falsehoods or misleading narratives that might be used by different actors could help the production of material to pre-bunk false claims. Potential misinformation can be curated and specific sources for debunking may already be identified. This approach will help address the inherent slower pace of the collaborative model. The quicker a piece of misinformation can be debunked, the less chance it has to spread and take hold.

3. Collaboration is powerful. Collaboration and coordination among news organizations and journalists is a powerful tool in improving journalism and combating misinformation.

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Interviewees

Daniel Bramatti, President of ABRAJI (2019-2018) and Editor of Estadão Verifica

Sergio Lutdke, Executive Director of Comprova

Claire Wardle, First Draft



Objectif Désinfo, France

Inspired by the 2017 CrossCheck coalition, Objectif Désinfo was established in 2022, consisting of 23 French media companies, including local and national newsrooms, operating under the leadership of Agence France-Presse (AFP), with support from Google News Initiative.

Formation and Organization

The formation of Objectif Désinfo was facilitated and led by AFP. Members underwent training in countering mis- and disinformation. Tools and techniques needed for fact-checking processes were provided as part of the coalition's capacity building program. Academic organizations also joined the coalition contributing invaluable scholarly insights.

“[Objectif Désinfo] is showing the diversity of content and the diversity of angles, et cetera [from different newsrooms independently]. So it's another perspective. It's also probably more consistent with the [current] landscape of the media.”

Marie Bohner,

Head of Development and Partnerships, Digital Investigation, AFP

Operations and Strategies

Objectif Désinfo adopted an independent coalition model. Fact-checks were conducted by members of the coalition based on their own media organization's fact-checking procedures. Although the fact-checking and verification processes are in-house, key quality assurance parameters are applied and members committed to the coalition charter,

which was inspired by the Code of Principles of the International Fact-checking network (IFCN)⁴ and AFP’s charter⁵ of good editorial and ethical practices.

The charter commits to three principles: a) impartial, honest and balanced information coverage; b) transparent working methods that are accessible to readers; and c) visible and explained corrections.⁶

Step-by-step breakdown of the process from identifying content of concern to final reporting:

- 1. Monitoring.** Each member of the coalition independently monitors mis- and disinformation material circulating in the digital space. Members of the public can also send tips to the coalition through its reporting channel.
- 2. Fact-checking.** Fact-checking is carried out by individual members according to their internal procedures.
- 3. Publication.** Final fact-checking report is published on the coalition website and the fact-checking member’s channel.
- 4. Amplification.** Each member is encouraged to share the report through their own channels to extend its reach and impact.

Impact and Success

Considering the diversity of media and the competitive media landscape in France, building the broad Objectif Désinfo coalition was considered to be a major success. This demonstrated a cross-industry desire to improve the quality of the media reporting and address election-related misinformation.



The work done since CrossCheck in 2017 had a positive impact on totally fabricated content. It can be said that the work of both coalitions positively impacted the public’s awareness on manufactured materials as such that new online disinformation tactics have emerged as observed leading to the 2022 French elections. “False context is now being used more strategically to generate the most traction online.”⁷ However, changes in disinformation trends are seen due to developments on fabricated content with AI. An analysis⁸ from the Brennan Center for Justice on AI risks to elections concludes the need for whole-of-society response to protect democracies as AI technology risks threatens elections.

⁴IFCN Code of Principles. Poynter. Retrieve from <https://www.ifcncodeofprinciples.poynter.org/>

⁵AFP’s editorial and ethical standards. AFP. Retrieve from <https://factcheck.afp.com/afps-editorial-and-ethical-standards>

⁶The Objective Désinfo Charter. Agence France Presse. Retrieved from <https://factuel.afp.com/la-charte-objectif-desinfo>

⁷<https://firstdraftnews.org/articles/evolving-disinformation-tactics-in-france-comparing-the-2017-and-2019-crosscheck-projects/>

⁸<https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/how-ai-puts-elections-risk-and-needed-safeguards>

Challenges and Lessons Learned

As new types of misinformation emerge, particularly those generated by advanced technologies like AI, media organizations need to stay ahead of the curve. This requires a proactive posture on misinformation, with continued adaptation.

“We see an uptick in fabricated disinformation with IA generated contents - so the trends may change again for the next elections.”

Marie Bohner,
Head of Development and Partnerships,
Digital Investigation, AFP

Advice for Future Coalitions

- 1. Invest in building solidarity among the members.** Building on an initial meeting for all media participants meet in-person to strengthen relationships and follow-up with subsequent online communication and collaboration.
- 2. Diversify the membership.** Expand the coalition’s membership from national to local media outlets. Member diversity is crucial for understanding different audiences while working together as part of a common coalition charter.
- 3. Seek tech partners.** Disinformation campaigns exist in the digital space. Tech partners are valuable resources with tools and techniques to trace and analyze content rapidly.
- 4. Involve academic partners.** Fact-checking work will always need independent subject-matter experts to consult for verifications. Academic professors such as researchers are valuable resource persons to a coalition.

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Interviewees

Grégoire Lemarchand, Chief Editor Digital Verification and Deputy Global Editor-in-Chief, AFP

Marie Bohner, Head of Development and Partnerships, Digital Investigation, AFP



Verificado, México

Verificado was founded by Animal Político, AJ+ Español and Meedan in the lead up to Mexico's 2018 national elections. It grew from 90 to 120 coalition partners, including both national and local news outlets, civil society organizations, and universities, collectively engaged in identifying and scrutinizing content on digital platforms, fact-checking statements made by candidates, and releasing well-researched, reliable content.

Formation and Organization

Verificado was formed by Animal Político, acting as the coalition facilitator conducting outreach to potential members. After Verificado began operations, additional media outlets decided to support the coalition effort by sharing Verificado content. Verificado was designed to operate similarly to a news agency, whereby daily news content was distributed to members (or allied media partners) for publication via their channels. The coalition was designed to be a temporary effort, focusing only on a specific election.

“As I always say, half seriously and half jokingly, that Verificado cost me like 100 coffees. What did we do? What I had to do ... was sit down with each media outlet and explain the project to them.”

Daniel Moreno,
CEO & Founder,
Animal Político

Operations and Strategies

Verificado's fact-checking followed a rigorous process, with fact-checkers undergoing training as part of their coalition onboarding to ensure alignment with those processes in order to maintain quality and reduce the risks of mistakes.

Animal Politico's expertise meant that they played the primary fact-checking and content development role in the coalition.

Research support and subject matter expertise were provided by other members, specifically from civil society.

Step-by-step breakdown of the process from identifying content of concern to final reporting:

- 1. Monitoring.** Monitor false narratives, rumors and other misinformation content on social media and in the digital media.
- 2. Verification.** Identified the original source of the content in question.
- 3. Fact-checking process.** Verificado fact-checked the initial source by reaching out directly and providing an opportunity to present supporting evidence or proof of the claim.
- 4. Distribution.** The final report, completed by Animal Politico, was distributed to the members of the coalition for their respective amplification.

Impact and Success

Verificado's fact-checked reports were used by more than 100 media channels in Mexico. Coalition content was also published by non-member media outlets, demonstrating trust in Verificado's work and its impact. The coalition worked to ensure that third-party publication consisted of unedited coalition reports in full, rather than partial reports.

Verificado gained significant popularity in 2018. In less than 6 months, coalition members were able to create a brand that the public recognized and trusted.

“An important difference, what we wanted was to control 100% the quality, the rigor, the precision of the content and that is why we centralized the writing in Animal Político.”

Daniel Moreno,
CEO & Founder, Animal Politico

“There were many media outlets that republished content without authorization, which did not worry us because what we wanted was to disseminate the content.”

Daniel Moreno,
CEO & Founder, Animal Politico



“If we review the history of this country, there really are no media alliances. I refer to joint coverage and those types of cases for many reasons, but that has been the history in this country. Therefore, perhaps the fact that a hundred media outlets published notes from the same agency, well, it is remarkable in itself because there is no other similar example.”

Daniel Moreno,
CEO & Founder, Animal Politico

Challenges and Lessons Learned

The media landscape in Mexico limited the publication of Verificado content, with newsroom style, business model, resources, linkages and socio-political pressures impacting publication decisions. These affected the participation of Mexican media outlets.

Another challenge is the central role that Animal Politico plays. In some ways, members of Verificado will have to promote Animal Politico and that creates a certain level of competition.



“The idea of a coalition and for people to come together to set aside competition itself can be very time consuming. So there needs to be an organization that can lead this kind of a coalition building process. And that organization also has to be an organization that people know is well respected, trusted, and almost like I would say, a neutral kind of organization that doesn’t come with its own biases.”

Shalini Joshi, Asia Pacific Program Lead, Meedan

Advice for Future Coalitions

1. Misinformation is more than text. Be ready to address misinformation on multiple platforms. Misinformation is targeted at audiences and they can be found everywhere - on Instagram, Tiktok, Youtube and other platforms. Countering misinformation during elections means working across all media formats.

2. Build trust. Fact-checking can rarely match the speed and spread of misinformation so it is important to focus on accuracy to build trust in coalition reporting.

3. Investigate sources of misinformation. It is important to identify the original source, as it will be more impactful to be able to tell the public the source of the false information in addition to telling them that it is false.

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Interviewees

Daniel Moreno, Director, Animal Politico

Shalini Joshi, Program Manager, Meedan

Reverso, Argentina

Reverso is an Argentinian collaborative election coalition, inspired by election coalitions such as CrossCheck in France and Verificado in Mexico. It was established in 2019 by Chequeado with support from Agence France Presse, the Google News Initiative and First Draft to help address election misinformation.

Formation and Organization

Reverso operates during elections for a 6-month period. It is led by Chequeado, which collaborates with AFP on editorial processes. Any media organization can apply to become a member of Reverso. Membership requires a commitment to attend training on debunking and the use of fact-checking tools, as well as a course or class on understanding misinformation. Prospective members also commit to publish at least two coalition reports during the duration of the project, and to correct misinformation in their own reporting.

“Everything that you see in our website or republish is something that we create together.”

Pablo Fernandez,
Editorial, Reverso

Operations and Strategies

Reverso follows an 8-step verification methodology:⁹

1. Select possibly misleading content from social networks.
2. Weigh its relevance.
3. When it can be identified, consult the original source.
4. When they can be identified, consult those involved in and/or affected by the disinformation.
5. Consult official sources.
6. Consult alternative sources.
7. Give context and explain the scope and path of the content.
8. Confirm or deny.

Reverso requires that its debunking reports are published in their original form without edits or alterations. This is important for reporting fidelity, but also to prevent the creation of clickbait headlines that could undermine trust in Reverso.

Recognizing that any fact-checking mistakes would be amplified by at least 100 media channels, Reverso places great emphasis on fact-checking precision in order to build and maintain trust.

⁹Frequently Asked Questions (Undated). Reverso. Retrieved from <https://reversoar.com/preguntas-frecuentes/>

Step-by-step breakdown of the process from identifying content of concern to final reporting:

1. Identification of False Narratives. Reverso members identify potentially inaccurate narratives for fact-checking. Members are provided with tools helping them supply Reverso with content for verification and debunking.

2. Fact-Checking. Once potentially false narratives are identified, the actual fact-checking process begins using Reverso’s 8-step methodology.

3. Verification. Three editors double-check every article before publication to ensure accuracy.

4. Distribution. Once the fact-checking and verification processes are completed, the finished report is sent to coalition members for publication. Coalition reports must be published as is, without any changes.

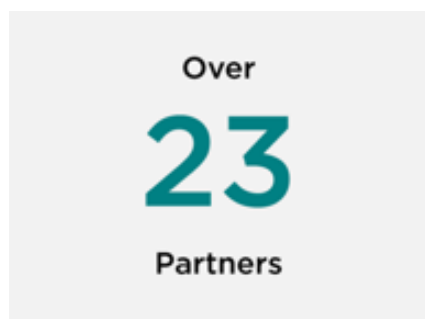
5. Correction. Should a fact-checking mistake be made, Reverso members have committed to correct that mistake without delay.

“When we ... ‘publish’, when we press the button and send it to 100 media outlets, the most seen and visited media outlets in the country, it’s very important to be precise.”

Pablo Fernandez,
Editorial, Reverso

Impact and Success

Reverso has achieved widespread distribution of its fact-checked reports, and major news organizations have issued corrections of their reporting in response to Reverso fact-checking reports.



“For me a very meaningful impact or achievement is seeing big media outlets correcting themselves about something that they were wrong. That is amazing and it’s something that usually doesn’t happen and we were able to do that. So I’m really happy. We are really happy about that.”

Pablo Fernandez,
Editorial, Reverso

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Reverso has grappled with designing effective training strategies in the post-pandemic era, as in-person training is more difficult to organize, and remote engagement or training is not as impactful. In-person training had been invaluable in the past, not only for the direct transfer of skills and knowledge, but also for building coalition solidarity and cohesion.

Advice for Future Coalitions

- 1. Consult with previous coalitions.** Learn from their experiences and best practices.
- 2. Articulate your purpose.** Be clear and transparent with all partners involved in the coalition, as well as with intended audiences about what to expect.
- 3. Monitor public engagement.** Pay attention to audience engagement and consider how to best maintain it in the future.

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Frequently Asked Questions (Undated). **Reverso.** Retrieved from <https://reversoar.com/preguntas-frecuentes/>

Interviewees

Pablo Fernandez, ED at Chequeado and Editor at Reverso

Shalini Joshi, Program Manager, Meedan

Claire Wardle, First Draft

#FactsFirstPH, Philippines

Building on the work of several groups that were formed to address freedom of expression, media safety and other issues, Rappler coordinated an effort in 2022 to form #FactsFirstPH to address electoral mis- and disinformation.

Formation and Organization

Rappler previously worked with communities and various stakeholders through its civic engagement arm MovePH, and reached out through its network to different groups that helped form the four operational layers¹⁰ of #FactsFirstPH:

- 1. Accountability** - formed by legal organizations.
- 2. Fact-checking partners** - formed by media organizations.
- 3. Research partners** - formed by academic organizations.
- 4. Mesh partners** - formed by civil society organizations.

Prospective members were able to join the coalition through an online form on the coalition website or via email,¹¹ committing to the coalition set of principles¹²:

- Debunk lies
- Amplify facts
- Expose disinformation actors and narratives
- Hold perpetrators and enablers accountable
- Protect truth-tellers
- Increase awareness
- Protect democratic institutions by fighting disinformation

“We saw the need for a support system for journalists or newsrooms that are being harassed or even people who are supporting them, who are being harassed online because of their involvement in this effort.”

Gemma Mendoza,
Head of Research and Strategy,
Rappler

¹⁰ The battle for facts needs you. (Undated). #FactsFirstPH. Retrieved from <https://factsfirst.ph/about>

¹¹ Be a #FactsFirstPH Partner Organization!. (Undated). #FactsFirstPH. Retrieved from <https://factsfirst.ph/members>

¹² The members agree to the following principles. (Undated). #FactsFirstPH. Retrieve from <https://factsfirst.ph/principles>

Operations and Strategies

While the coalition is collaborative in nature, it applies an independent model, with fact-checking conducted independently by members of the coalition’s “Fact-checking layer”. Fact-checking is implemented based on the internal processes of each individual member organization, before the final report is shared within the coalition and amplified by the members.

A step-by-step breakdown of the process, from identifying content of concern to final reporting, includes the following:

- 1. Monitoring.** Conduct monitoring of viral content online and process tips, claims and other potential false narratives reported to the coalition.
- 2. Fact-checking.** On members’ own initiative, or as assigned through coalition discussions, based on member’s internal procedures.
- 3. Coordination & Translation.** During the process of developing the report, members of the coalition provide further information and or translation takes place.
- 4. Publication.** The final product is published on the #FactsFirstPH website.
- 5. Amplification.** Members of the coalition are encouraged to amplify the report through their respective channels and social media.

Impact and Success

Coalition impact and success was primarily measured through the level of participation of its membership as members amplified the reach of the fact-check reports. Involving more than one hundred groups from different organizations was the biggest win for the coalition, particularly during the crucial election period. Bringing together what was a diverse group of organizations to work successfully towards a common goal was another achievement.

Many journalists and newsrooms experienced harassment, and some faced legal issues because of their work with #FactsFirstPH. The legal support system created through the coalition’s “Accountability layer” helped address this, and has had an impact beyond elections across the media sector.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

According to Rappler Head of Research and Strategy, Gemma Mendoza, misinformation narratives are seeded early. Malicious actors often initiate active disinformation campaigns years prior to an election.

131

Partners

1,422

Fact-checks as of
Nov 15, 2023

“We saw the need for a support system for journalists or newsrooms that are being harassed or even people who are supporting them, who are being harassed online because of their involvement in this effort.”

Gemma Mendoza,
Head of Research and Strategy,
Rappler

Advice for Future Coalitions

- 1. Start early.** Starting cooperative efforts early is crucial for coalitions as narratives aimed at influencing elections often begin circulating long before the formal election period.
- 2. Collaborate broadly.** Collaboration across various sectors and disciplines is essential. Relying solely on fact-checking might be insufficient to counteract disinformation in the context of today’s social media landscape.
- 3. Recognize potential challenges.** Understand the nature of disinformation and its intended impact, including constraints in the digital landscape and threats to fact-checking groups.

“The thing with these, is that these are experiments. I wouldn’t say #FactsFirstPH was perfect. Right? At that time, we were experimenting. And the reason why you wanted to experiment was because there was a huge challenge.”

Gemma Mendoza,
Head of Research and Strategy, Rappler

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The members agree to the following principles. (Undated). **#FactsFirstPH**. Retrieved from <https://factsfirst.ph/principles>

Interviewees

Gemma Mendoza, Lead, Disinformation Research at Rappler

Shalini Joshi, Program Manager, Meedan

Nigerian Fact-Checkers' Coalition, Nigeria

The Nigerian Fact-Checkers' Coalition (NFC), established in 2022, was founded by three IFCN-certified fact-checking organizations. It has 31 members who operate on-site and remotely in three dedicated situation rooms - in Lagos, Abuja and in the UK. The coalition's non-profit efforts aimed to prevent crises stemming from election-related misinformation and preserve election integrity.



The NFC benefited from the support of a UK-based fact-checking organization Full Fact through the use of their AI fact-checking technology. The Nigerian elections of 2023 marked the first time Full Fact's tools were deployed in a Nigerian election.

Formation and Organization

Prior to the NFC's founding, there was a coming together of like-minded fact-checking and media organizations in 2018 to combat mis- and disinformation during Nigeria's 2019 general election. Additional members joined in 2022, benefiting from coalition capacity building programs on fact-checking and the use of technical tools.

“That was the first time, the first election in Nigeria that would include the use of AI for claim surveillance and claim detection and claim matching.”

David Ajikobi,
Nigeria Editor, Africa Check

“What was different with this experience was that nobody was paid. There was no financial incentive. The only incentive was that we did not want a country that would [fall into] crisis because of the disinformation around the elections.”

David Ajikobi,
Nigeria Editor, Africa Check

Operations and Strategies

The NFC takes a multi-faceted approach in operating the coalition. Coming from a background deeply rooted in fact-checking, the founding members implemented a mapping of disinformation trends to anticipate possible misinformation. This proactive approach helped them to address misinformation promptly. They also conducted live fact-checking, and undertook efforts to increase public awareness about misinformation and the importance of truth in public discourse.

Step-by-step breakdown of the process from identifying content of concern to final reporting:

1. Identification of Content. The coalition identifies the content or claims that need to be fact-checked. This could be based on the prevalence of the claim, its potential impact, or its relevance to current events or public interest.

2. Assignment of Task. Once a claim is identified, an editor assigns the fact-checking task to a researcher or fact-checker from one of the coalition members.

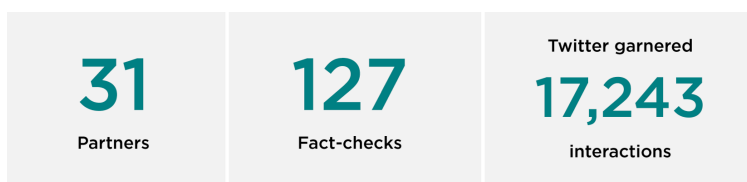
3. Fact-Checking. The researcher or fact-checker then verifies the claim.

4. Review and Quality Control. As part of their commitment to accountability, the coalition has a system where a fact-check must be reviewed for accuracy and bias by four or five people before it is finalized.

5. Publication and Amplification. Once the fact-check is completed and has passed through the necessary reviews, it is published by the NFC, and coalition members.

Impact and Success

The NFC helped build public awareness that any political statement or claims should be verified rather than being taken at face value. They consider this their greatest achievement, as a public culture of verification makes it harder for misinformation to spread unchecked. This not only contributes to a more informed electorate, but also holds politicians and other public figures accountable for their statements.



“We were able to create that consciousness in the mind of Nigerians to the point a presidential candidate reacted and started telling his supporters, “Go and verify” after every statement he made thereafter in reaction to one of our fact-checks.”

Opeyemi Kehind,
Editor, FactCheck Hub

The NFC, initially started as an election coalition prior to 2023, has become a full-fledged fact-checking and media literacy-focused media coalition that fights mis- and disinformation narratives in Nigeria.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

One of the challenges the NFC faced was the unanticipated volume of reports they needed to fact-check. The NFC also realized that starting their work earlier would have been helpful. This would have allowed them to conduct awareness campaigns against mis- and disinformation earlier.

While collaboration is a key strength of the coalition, it faced challenges due to its size. With differences in member's understanding or perspectives, clear operational guidelines are important.

“The earlier any coalition gets support, the better they will be able to perform in their route as long as they are all committed and in it for the right reasons.”

David Ajikobi,
Nigeria Editor, Africa Check

Advice for Future Coalitions

- 1. Plan for scale and raise awareness.** Develop a strategy to address the amount of work required, and undertake awareness raising early.
- 2. Document.** Documenting decisions and processes is helpful for reviewing progress and making necessary adjustments.
- 3. Oversight.** High level oversight is necessary to ensure integrity.
- 4. Develop homegrown tools.** When possible, invest in developing tools locally.

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Interviewees

Opeyemi Kehinde, Editor & Team Lead, FactCheckHub

David Ajikobi, Nigeria Editor, AfricaCheck

Andrew Dudfield, CEO, Full Fact



ANCHOR CHANGE