Chain of Harm Co-Design Workshop:

An Implementation Guide for Designing Evidence-Based, Locally Led Information Integrity Programming

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Authors:

Brittany Hamzy
Senior Information Integrity Officer

Lisa Reppell
Senior Global Social Media and Disinformation Specialist

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

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IFES advances democracy for a better future. We collaborate with civil society, public institutions and the private sector to build resilient democracies that deliver for everyone. As a global leader in the promotion and protection of democracy, our technical assistance and applied research develops trusted electoral bodies capable of conducting credible elections; effective and accountable governing institutions; civic and political processes in which all people can safely and equally participate; and innovative ways in which technology and data can positively serve elections and democracy. Since 1987, IFES has worked in more than 145 countries, from developing to mature democracies. IFES is a global, nonpartisan organization based in Arlington, Virginia, USA, and registered as a non-profit organization [501(c)(3)] under the United States tax code.
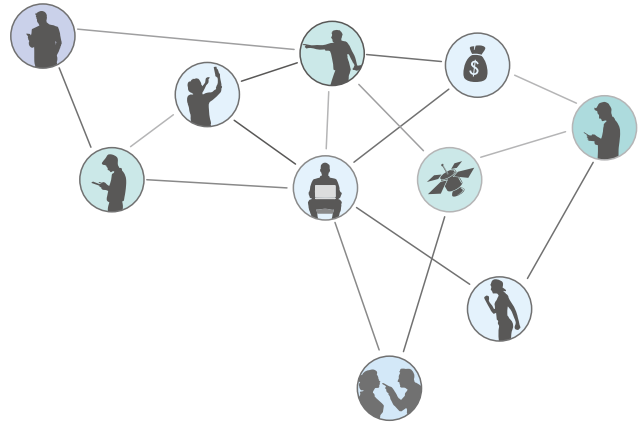
Acknowledgements:

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Operationalizing the Chain of Harm

Overview

The methodological notes below provide guidance for the implementation of the International Foundation for Electoral System's (IFES's) Chain of Harm to enhance the responsiveness of information integrity programming to the needs and unique circumstances of traditionally marginalized communities.

Organizations within the democratic, rights, and governance (DRG) community of practice will be able to consult these notes to replicate, build, and design programming. By following the recommendations outlined in this resource, organizations can plan and execute primary source research on information integrity issues, effectively facilitate program design workshops with relevant local partners, and implement and track new, research-based program interventions.

This resource builds on and complements the methodology outlined in IFES's publication, *The Chain of Harm: Designing Evidence-based, Locally Led Information Integrity Programming.* It begins by describing how to collect the primary research that serves as the foundation of programming through surveys and focus group discussions. Guidance for practitioners to facilitate the Co-design Workshop follows before turning to best practices for program implementation and monitoring and evaluation. As the Chain of Harm centers the perspectives of traditionally marginalized groups, accessibility guidance is included in line with this ethos.

This practical use guide is derived from IFES data collected during two pilot implementations of the Chain of Harm in Iraq and Guyana between 2021 and 2023 with support from the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. In both countries, IFES' Center for Applied Research and Learning implemented the approach in close collaboration with local partners. While these methodological notes may often reference collaborations between international and local partners, a local organization implementing directly may also leverage such an approach.

What is the Chain of Harm?

The Chain of Harm is an analytical tool that depicts the interplay between existing, endemic narratives – such as dangerous speech, conspiracy, or misinformation – and directed, intentional disinformation campaigns that seek to amplify and exploit these fissures to serve a goal. The Chain of Harm divides these challenges into five component parts, each presenting a discrete intervention point for programming to target.

For the purposes of the Co-design Workshop, facilitators use a simplified version of the Chain of Harm that depicts each of these five stages as a means to help understand the component parts of participants' current programming and to drive more expansive thinking about additional interventions.

For additional details about the theory behind the Chain of Harm, please see *Chain of Harm: Designing Evidence-Based, Locally Led Information Integrity Programming*

| Actor | Message | Mode of Dissemination | Interpreter | Risk |
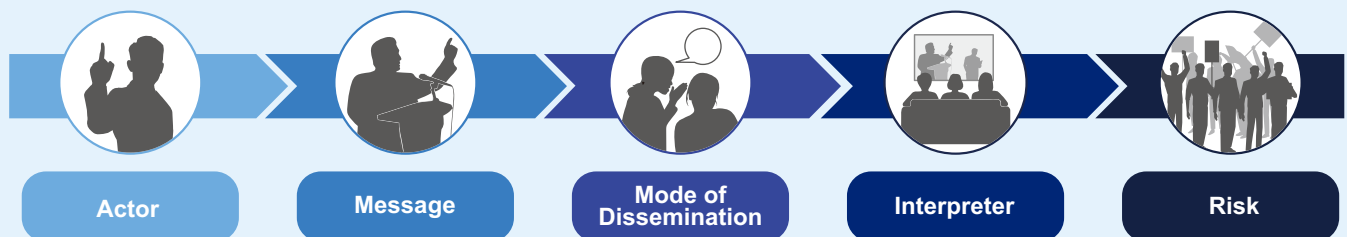
Chain of Harm Process

Operationalizing the Chain of Harm will enable the DRG community to better understand the information ecosystem in a specific country, region, or community, along with particular facets of online disinformation, misinformation, and dangerous speech (DMDS) and its spread and impacts among particular groups. Moreover, it enables implementers to evaluate existing or planned programming against the Chain of Harm and determine whether programming is adapted to the unique conditions that marginalized groups face or how programming should be adjusted to better respond to such conditions.

This process follows an iterative structure:

I. Primary research is conducted to understand current information ecosystems and the spread and impact of DMDS, and individuals' encounters with it, with a particular focus on the experiences of members of traditionally marginalized communities, such as ethnic or religious minorities, young people, persons with disabilities, and Indigenous People. This is done via a combination of deskwork, surveys, and focus group discussions.

II. Local program implementers are engaged to leverage the research to evaluate current programming and plan new interventions that respond directly to documented community needs.

III. Interventions are implemented and led locally, and program leaders monitor progress to determine impact, especially for marginalized communities.

The overall outcome of this approach is co-designed, locally led, research-driven interventions that increase the responsiveness of information integrity programming to the local context, with particular emphasis on the experiences of traditionally marginalized populations.

When to Use the Chain of Harm

Implementers that focus on information integrity interventions and programming can utilize the Chain of Harm at several stages of the program design or implementation phases. For example, it is a great tool to use early in the program design phase to tailor a nascent idea for a program to a specific context and population or when there is donor appetite for localization. It can also be applied at the mid-point or a key decision node of ongoing programming to identify gaps according to multiple perspectives and to determine where new or adapted programming activities could address them. The true value of the Chain of Harm is its ability to add nuance and complementary components to an existing program or idea – particularly to incorporate the varying perspectives of underrepresented populations.

Localization can take several forms depending on implementers' and donors' needs – from the village to the national level. Context should be driven largely by where implementers have strong partnerships and resources available for the project. The Chain of Harm Co-design Workshop itself can help determine the scale of a planned intervention, as the process is likely to reveal gaps in programming and, therefore, where critical populations are being missed. The Workshop can also start conversations about where resources are best allocated to maximize the impact, reach, and inclusiveness of programming.

Research

The research collection phase focuses on collecting and applying actionable data to improve information integrity programming. It does not attempt to map the media landscape to comprehensively describe the actors, behaviors, and content that drive DMDS in a particular context.

Especially in the research stage, when concepts are presented to survey takers or focus group participants who may not have encountered them before, it is important to use consistent definitions that provide sufficient context without veering into language that is overly technical or academic or that may bias responses.

The research phase comprises two primary research components: 1) qualitative research via focus group discussions and in-depth interviews and 2) quantitative survey research. In addition, research teams may leverage social media data to further contextualize either research component.

Survey Data

Overview

The aim of the survey is to develop an understanding of people's use of media and other information sources; perceptions surrounding disinformation, misinformation, and dangerous speech; and insights regarding the quality of information provided by both traditional and online sources of information in a specific local context. The survey should emphasize understanding the experiences and perceptions of members of marginalized groups. These may vary by context but can include populations such as individuals with disabilities, ethnic or religious minorities, women, or youth. To this end, it is important that survey development is a highly collaborative process that includes local context experts.

Research teams should survey a nationally representative sample as well as oversamples of key marginalized and minority groups, determined in consultation with local experts. This approach enables teams to derive a data-driven understanding of individuals' media and information consumption patterns, and beliefs surrounding DMDS and the trajectory of the information ecosystem in their contexts, as well as personal online experiences with DMDS. Moreover, oversample data enables researchers to probe further into the experiences of marginalized and minority communities and to analyze data through an intersectional lens.

Option 1: National Survey

For teams with sufficient project funds, the most comprehensive survey data will be collected through a dedicated national survey.

Survey segments:

I. **Demographics.** For this section, it is important to consult local partners and program teams to ensure the questions represent all relevant ethnic, racial, and/or religious groups and to ensure the questions and framing are as culturally sensitive as possible.

II. **Information landscape perception**. This section should appear before introducing DMDS in the survey to probe individuals' experiences in their country's information environment. While the programming to be adjusted may focus on countering DMDS, all programming still operates within the broader information environment. Therefore, it is vital to understand the modes people use to get information, what actors they trust or distrust, and what barriers and obstacles they face in accessing information. These elements are especially relevant for marginalized communities that may face particular barriers to accessing information or use alternate channels to access information.

III. **Disinformation and misinformation perception.** This section introduces the concepts of disinformation and misinformation to survey takers. Questions should focus on understanding individuals' experiences with disinformation and misinformation online, their confidence in identifying mis- or disinformation, their actions if they encounter possible disinformation, and the perceived impact of mis- or disinformation on themselves and society more broadly.

IV. **Dangerous speech experiences and perceptions.** The dangerous speech should be segmented from disinformation and misinformation given that individuals' experiences with dangerous speech online might be very different. Encountering dangerous speech online can be a highly personal experience, and this section – more than the prior ones – should focus on such experiences. Frame the questions in this section by asking respondents whether they encounter dangerous speech about "people from a similar background/societal group" versus "people not from a similar background/societal group." Participants can comment, if they wish, on experiences that are not necessarily about their own identity group. Questions should also be added about general perceptions of dangerous speech online.

Option 2: Targeted Question Set

Conducting large-scale, representative national surveys can be time- and resource-intensive. Therefore, this route is not always available to program teams hoping to gather data on an information landscape and trust environment. A more scaled-down, targeted question set can fill the need to obtain this data.

When using this approach, you may want to share costs by coordinating with other stakeholders that may be interested in obtaining the same or similar data. For example, if a program team is implementing a national survey for a separate project, or if a partner organization is conducting a survey, it can be useful to insert a tailored, targeted set of questions on information integrity into that survey. Potential insertions should be pared-down versions of the questions in the full-length survey and include questions related to information gathering habits, the perceived trustworthiness of on- and offline media, the prevalence of dangerous speech, confidence in identifying disinformation, and perceived impacts of disinformation on society.

Sample questions to include in this targeted question set can include:

- How concerned are you about misinformation and fake news and its impacts on politics and elections in your country?

- In the last few months, how often have you encountered information or messages about topics of public interest, including those regarding politics and government, that you believe were misinformation or fake news?

- How confident are you that you can identify misinformation or fake news?

- How confident are you that people in your country can identify misinformation and fake news?

- Which sources of information in your country do you think are most likely to spread misinformation or fake news about topics of public interest?

- To the best of your recollection, how often, if at all, have you come across messages that promoted fear, hate or violence toward people from a similar background/societal group as you?

- To the best of your recollection, how often, if at all, have you come across messages that promoted fear, hate or violence toward someone or a group of people from a similar background/societal group as you?

- Regarding the messages that you have encountered that promoted fear, hate, or violence, where did you see these messages?

- Of the messages promoting fear, hate, or violence that you remember seeing, who posted or spread the messages?

Overarching Best Practices

The primary components of the research – the focus group discussions and survey – should be staggered if time allows, presenting an opportunity for one component of the research to inform the other. Beginning with either qualitative or quantitative research presents distinct potential benefits. Conducting qualitative research first could enable a research team to begin developing hypotheses that it subsequently can test with higher statistical precision through quantitative research. Beginning with qualitative research can also be helpful in testing messages, such as counter-disinformation fact-checks. In such cases, the research team could then refine the messages and test them with a wider audience. Conversely, a research team that begins with quantitative research could leverage qualitative interviews and focus group discussions to contextualize and add nuance to the quantitative data. Moreover, after analyzing quantitative data, a research team could use focus group discussions to interview populations of interest identified during its analysis of survey data.

If time and cost do not allow for a survey, the research team could obtain data using additional focus groups and/or comparing focus group data with previous surveys or to demographic information or census data. It is worth noting that, while government data may be more readily available, the quantity and quality of data collected on marginalized populations may be lacking. While the onus of analysis increases for the organization leading the process, the outcome of obtaining data for a solid programmatic foundation is essentially unchanged.

Limit the number of open-ended questions during the survey phase to allow for cleaner data analysis, especially for Segments 3 and 4 of the survey described as Option 1 (above). While open-ended questions can be useful to collect more nuanced, unstructured data than through closed-ended questions, it can be challenging to analyze the data later, especially if the data analysis is performed in a language other than that of the original survey. Translating open-ended data before coding it into categories loses a lot of nuance. One workaround is to ask semi-open-ended questions, in which an interviewer poses questions that participant answers as he or she chooses; then the interviewer immediately sorts the response using a pre-defined set of answer choices. A possible challenge with this approach is that the interviewer must code responses accurately in real time. Both translating semi-open-ended answers and relying on real-time interviewer coding can introduce bias and muddy results.

These potential issues mean some questions are more appropriate for a qualitative setting, such as an interview or focus group discussion. When developing the survey, it is natural to want to include questions for which the survey format is less likely to elicit optimal responses. For example, "What, if anything, did you do as a result of encountering messages online promoting fear, hate or violence?" is too open-ended for a survey. It could instead be asked as a multiple-choice question with a series of possible responses, although it is nearly impossible to design a set of choices that could capture all the things an individual might do. One solution is to make the question (and others with similar challenges) open-ended. However, as noted above, too many open-ended questions can lead to challenges in data analysis.

Locally Led Focus Group Discussions

Methodology

Plan to conduct focus group research with the goal of developing an understanding of a specific population's use of media and other information sources and respondents' perceptions surrounding disinformation, misinformation, and dangerous speech and of the quality of information provided by both traditional and online sources of information. In particular, aim to understand the experiences and perceptions of members of marginalized populations. Ideally, to capture a significant amount of data, plan to conduct at least eight to 10 focus group discussions, with at least two for each target population. If time and resources are limited, you may need to conduct fewer than eight – but, to ensure data quality, do not conduct fewer than four focus group discussions.

Focus groups uncover attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences, and reactions through the discussion. They showcase qualitatively how people's opinions influence others, and the discussions often generate ideas that would not have emerged in talking to each participant individually. In this way, focus group discussions are more reflective of a group's opinion than that of any one person.

Begin each focus group discussion with a series of questions on participants' media consumption before showing them examples of two pieces of misinformation. Then ask about their beliefs, how they may discern whether this information is true or not, and whether they would share it if they saw it. Next, present "reality checks" on the misinformation and ask the participants what makes them believe (or disbelieve) the "truth". Finally, ask participants to share their experiences with dangerous speech and how they do or do not respond to it on- and offline.

For best results, focus groups of six to 10 participants should be homogeneous (from the same target population) but still reflect the diversity of that population. For example, to gather data on women the following groups could be formed: young women (under 30 years old), middle-aged women (between 30 and 60 years old) and older women (above 60 years old). This smaller group can instill a sense of safety when members talk about sensitive topics such as misinformation. In selecting focus group participants, be aware of any potential power relationships (for example, avoid placing a supervisor and employees in the same group). Also avoid including close friends or relatives in the same group. The aim is to create an environment in which people can discuss their opinions freely and openly; this is best done if participants do not know each other. It is important that the facilitating organization has strong ties to the target communities so it can identify potential interpersonal conflicts ahead of group selection.

To ensure the methodological integrity of the data gathered, identify or create context-specific stimuli for content examples in consultation with local partners. To ensure all materials used with focus groups are accessible, especially to those with visual disabilities, present them in both hard-copy and screen reader-accessible versions. All materials, including those in accessible versions, should contain original links so those with visual disabilities can process the information in the focus group as they would encounter it online. Doing so will eliminate implicit bias that could occur if assistants or facilitators read the information aloud and unconsciously impart inflection or meaning. Additionally, it is good practice to ask participants about any needs for reasonable accommodations prior to conducting the focus groups.

Setting up successful focus groups requires the following steps:

1. Determine the number and composition of the groups;

2. Select a qualitative research firm or onboard a research partner;

3. Develop a recruitment screener and a recruitment data collection spreadsheet;

4. Recruit and schedule focus groups;

5. Develop focus group guide and materials to share during the groups, including content such as images or video and handout packets;

6. Onboard and train focus group moderators and note-takers;

7. Book facilities and prepare them for the focus groups;

8. Hold the focus groups; and

9. Conduct data analysis.

Administration

The focus group discussions should be administered by trusted local partners who are familiar with implementing information integrity-related programming or who plan to implement soon. Focus group discussions most effectively collect the qualitative data needed when they comprise of the following five segments:

I. **Information landscape.** Questions prompt discussions about media and media consumption, especially regarding levels of trust in different types of media and the reasons for the trust. For focus groups that include participants who identify as persons with disabilities, it is also important to ask questions around the accessibility of information. The goal of this segment is to understand how people get information they trust and understand their traditional and social media usage, as well as obstacles to accessing quality information.

II. **Misinformation examples.** The first example-driven segment asks participants to react to actual social media content and simulates the experience of encountering that content online. Select two localized examples that showcase misinformation or manipulative, misleading content with input from local partners. The examples work best if they are actual content that participants could encounter online via social media or messaging apps. However, they should not be so popular that participants are likely to recognize them as misinformation. You may also create and present doctored content that mimics found misinformation. Show participants the content as it would appear to them in their information landscape. Focus questions in this segment on signals of trustworthiness as well as sharing habits for this content. Facilitators should avoid introducing terms such as misinformation, disinformation, or manipulative, misleading content unless a participant first brings them up during the discussion. The goal of this segment is to understand participants' first reactions to the content, whether they would trust it (and why), and what they would think if a family member or friend forwarded it to them.

III. **Generalized misinformation and disinformation questions.** Only after participants discuss the two content examples should you introduce the concepts of misinformation and deceptive content. This sequence mitigates the risk that facilitators might bias participants' responses given the tricky topic of misinformation. Disclose that the content presented to them contains manipulative, misleading information before probing with participants how they would decide whether to trust the given piece of information and how they believe deceptive and misleading information affects them and their communities.

IV. **Counter message efficacy.** In this segment of the discussion, share two new examples that directly rebut the misleading content shared previously. Focus group facilitators should not immediately disclose that these examples are fact checks. Instead, they should ask participants about their feelings of trust in the content, whether and how they would share the content, and if this new content alters their perceptions of the original content. The goal is to encourage participants to think about what information makes for a compelling and successful counter message and what they may need to look out for to better differentiate misinformation from truth.

V. **Dangerous speech.** The final segment focuses more specifically on hateful and dangerous messages – those that promote fear, hatred, or violence toward a group of people. The questions in this segment ask about participants' personal experiences with dangerous speech, whether and how they have encountered or shared it, and the impact on their own or their communities' lives.

Content Examples

Content should be locally relevant – things that participants are likely to encounter during their daily lives via either traditional or social media. Focus group findings will be more useful and compelling if the samples present messages about topics of public interest that are engaging enough to spur a lively discussion, such as those contained in the Annex.

Data Collection

Before recruiting focus group participants, the local partners who organize the groups should receive training on how to recruit for and moderate the discussion. The training should address best practices for hosting a group discussion if the partners are not experienced in conducting focus groups. These capacity strengthening sessions should also train the partners on inclusive practices, safeguarding privacy, and creating environments that foster trust and meaningful discussions.

When holding a focus group discussion, keep in mind:

☑ **Confidentiality.** Participants agree to keep answers and conversation in the focus group confidential.

☑ **Anonymity.** The facilitator and research team will keep responses anonymous.

☑ **Respect.** People have different perspectives and experiences. It is okay to disagree but emphasize that disrespectful language or abusive behavior will not be tolerated.

Ideally, all focus groups will be recorded to aid in data analysis. However, not all groups may be comfortable being recorded due to privacy and/or safety concerns. It is imperative to seek input about recording from the local partner conducting the groups. Obtain the written consent of all participants before a focus group takes place if it will be recorded. Audio recordings are most useful for preparing transcripts and filling any gaps in note-taking. Even if sessions are recorded, arrange for a dedicated note-taker for each session, and provide a note-taking template. It should be explicitly stated to participants that audio or video recordings will only be used for anonymous data collection by the organization(s) directly involved with this project.

If focus groups include youth, obtain written consent from any participants under the age of 18, and their legal guardians. Further safety considerations can apply for their protection, such as advising young people under 18 to use pseudonyms and to limit the amount of personally identifying information they share with the group. Alternatively, all focus group members can be kept anonymous from each other.

Chain of Harm Co-design Workshop

Overview

The Chain of Harm Co-design Workshop enables practitioners, donors, and academics to make implementation decisions based on an understanding of how each of the five stages of the Chain impact different communities. These include people who identify with intersectional social identities, such as women with disabilities or young people who are members of ethnic minorities.

The two-day, facilitated workshop brings together representatives of local partner organizations or institutions, local and international experts, and implementers. The workshop guides the group through a process that enables them to articulate or expand on an information integrity programming approach to reach previously underserved or disserved populations.

The detailed, session-by-session guide to the workshop below is followed by an overview of overarching accessibility considerations that ensure maximum inclusivity.

A roadmap to the Chain of Harm Co-design Workshop:

I. **Introduction to the Chain of Harm**. The workshop begins by introducing participants to the Chain of Harm. A series of activities guide participants to think about their own programming through the Chain of Harm lens.

II. **Identifying program gaps.** As participants expand and add nuance to their initial programming maps, they see both where they are working and which stages have gaps or fewer activities. It is important to address those gaps during the workshop to spark brainstorming about interventions to fill them.

III. **Engaging with research.** After seeing the gaps in their current programming, participants are introduced to research outcomes through a series of presentations.

IV. **Programming development and design.** After participants analyze and discuss the research data, they will brainstorm possible activities that could speak to the research outcomes they see and their organizations' strengths and gaps. They then identify the top three or four ideas.

V. **Action planning.** Participants complete action plans for the top two to four follow-on implementation projects. As part of the action planning process, they consider the indicators they might use to capture impact and ensure success.

Accessibility Considerations and Best Practices

The goal of the workshop is to incorporate as many voices and perspectives as possible from marginalized populations into future programming. Several considerations will increase the workshop's accessibility and inclusivity to the widest possible group of participants.

Anticipate and plan for inclusivity considerations before any activities take place. Workshop conveners and facilitators should confirm that participants represent the true landscape of marginalized communities for a certain context. Acknowledge intersectional identities and needs, as well as potential power dynamics in the group. Participants in the workshop (and possibly the focus group discussions) are likely to have some connections to each other and experience with leadership roles; still, they should serve as critical and credible bridges to target populations.

Ahead of each activity, ask all participants what reasonable accommodations they need so they can participate fully. Such accommodations may include translation or interpretation for language minorities, simultaneous sign language interpretation, holding the event in a fully accessible venue, or ensuring the location is accessible via public transportation. Organizers should avoid scheduling activities on religious holidays, especially those that are important to religious minorities, or during other community events. A best practice to ensure participation regardless of stakeholders' socio-economic status is to cover transportation costs and/or provide stipends for all participants. Additionally, provide all materials to participants in advance. These should be accessible for screen readers and include detailed alt text.

The event room must have sufficient space around the tables and the Chain of Harm wall for participants who use wheelchairs or other mobility aids. Ensure that all signage, including the Chain of Harm, is placed lower down on the wall so all can access. Additionally, the facilitation should increase accessibility. Facilitators should use and encourage accessible facilitation techniques, such as asking "What do you notice in the data?" rather than "what do you see in the data?".
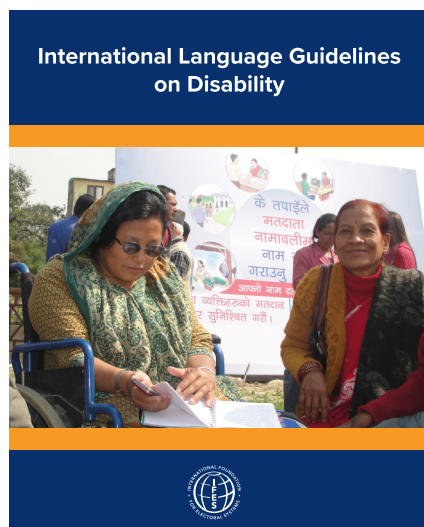
For more information on accessible language, see IFES's *International Language Guidelines on Disability*

Facilitators can incorporate more partner and small group work, ensuring that people with disabilities can participate fully by adding thoughts to sticky notes or flip charts. There should be a healthy mix of individual, paired, and group brainstorming so participants who are less vocal or less confident sharing ideas in front of the entire group can do so anonymously at multiple points during the workshop. Planning multiple ways to contribute, including by writing ideas on sticky notes and voting, enables participants with different comfort levels, deference to authority, and experience to share and shape ideas in the room.

Assign dedicated note-takers for each session and share all notes with participants in digital format in real time. Doing so enables participants who use screen readers to access and contribute to the notes and documents. Facilitators should verbally read out all text from PowerPoint presentations. They should also verbally describe ideas as they are added to the wall as well as point out any that are grouped together so everyone stays on the same page throughout the workshop.

Sample Agenda Sessions

Pre-workshop Setup

Hold the workshop in a room large enough to accommodate all participants. If possible, the room should have one large, blank wall. The workshop is ideally suited for 15 to 40 participants, depending on the number of local stakeholders. For best results, tape printouts of the Chain of Harm stages in readable font to the blank wall in this sequence: Actor, Message, Mode of Dissemination, Interpreter, and Risk. Allow space to walk around this display. The room should also have computer hook-ups and a projector screen for presentations, preferably on a different wall than the one where the Chain of Harm stages are posted. Depending on the number of participants, it is useful to have multiple tables or seating groups for four to eight participants each. Provide multiple sizes and colors of sticky notes, stickers in at least four colors, pens and markers, and flip charts.

Session 1.1: Introductions and Icebreaker

In this session, facilitators introduce themselves and the workshop objectives, communicating that this iterative process relies on the full participation of everyone in the room. After these introductions, the facilitators will lead an icebreaker exercise in which all participants introduce themselves to create a sense of camaraderie before beginning the remaining sessions.

Objectives:

1. Participants understand the relevance of the program design workshop to their work.

2. Participants are familiar with the others in the room and their connection to this programming.

Session 1.2: Mainstreaming Terms

The facilitators can prepare a short presentation to review all the terminology that will be used during the workshop and explain different types of interventions that can be conducted at various stages of the Chain of Harm. A verbal explanation and discussion can suffice for a group that is already familiar with the topics. Include and discuss concrete examples of all terms to ground the discussion in possible interventions ahead of the exercise that comes next and to serve as a segue. If an interpreter will assist, discuss the terms and their meanings with them ahead of time to agree on clear terminology and avoid confusion.

Sample terms can include:

- Disinformation, misinformation, and dangerous speech (DMDS);

- Fact checking and counter messaging;

- Pre-bunking and debunking; and

- Inoculation.

Objective:

1. Participants are aware of intervention terms and their programmatic implications (including advantages and potential disadvantages).

Session 1.3: Presenting the Chain of Harm

This session introduces the Chain of Harm and how it relates to programming interventions. Points to emphasize include:

- The Chain of Harm can reveal meaningful insights that might otherwise be missed.

- Each stage of the Chain impact different communities, including people who identify with multiple social identities, such as women with disabilities or young people who are ethnic minorities.

- DMDS does not need to be equally neutralized at every phase along the Chain to reduce risk. Rather, the Chain of Harm can help prioritize program decisions to focus on the most impactful intervention points.

Objective: Participants are introduced to the Chain of Harm.

Actor	Message	Mode of Dissemination	Interpreter	Risk
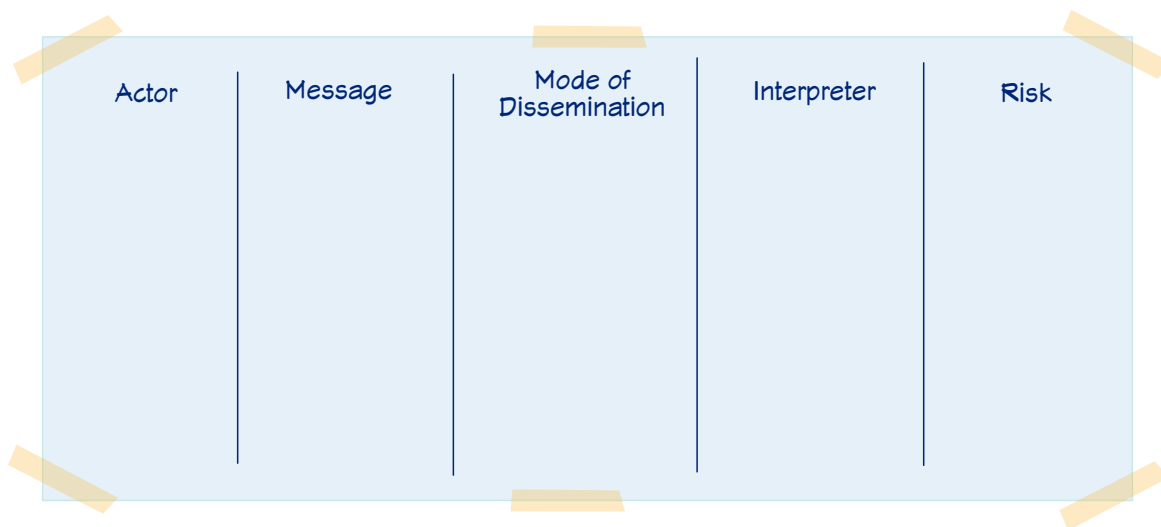
Session 1.4: Mapping Current Programming Along the Chain of Harm

Option 1. This option focuses on existing partner programming and how to map a current project along the Chain of Harm. Important goals of this session are to deepen understanding of the Chain of Harm and how it can be a useful tool for brainstorming, and to ensure that everyone in the room (including the facilitators) understands the work that is already occurring in the target community.

Before the session, the facilitators should identify three or four aspects of current programming and one or two interventions at each stage of the Chain of Harm. These can be broad; the group can narrow them

down with more discrete interventions. Write the name of each intervention on a sticky note and add the note to the corresponding stage of the Chain of Harm on the wall.

For each intervention, facilitators should ask explicit questions such as:

- What needs do you see that led you to conduct this intervention?

- What challenges are you experiencing or do you foresee while implementing the intervention?

- Are there gaps that this intervention does not fill? For example, are specific audiences left out or platforms that cannot be used?
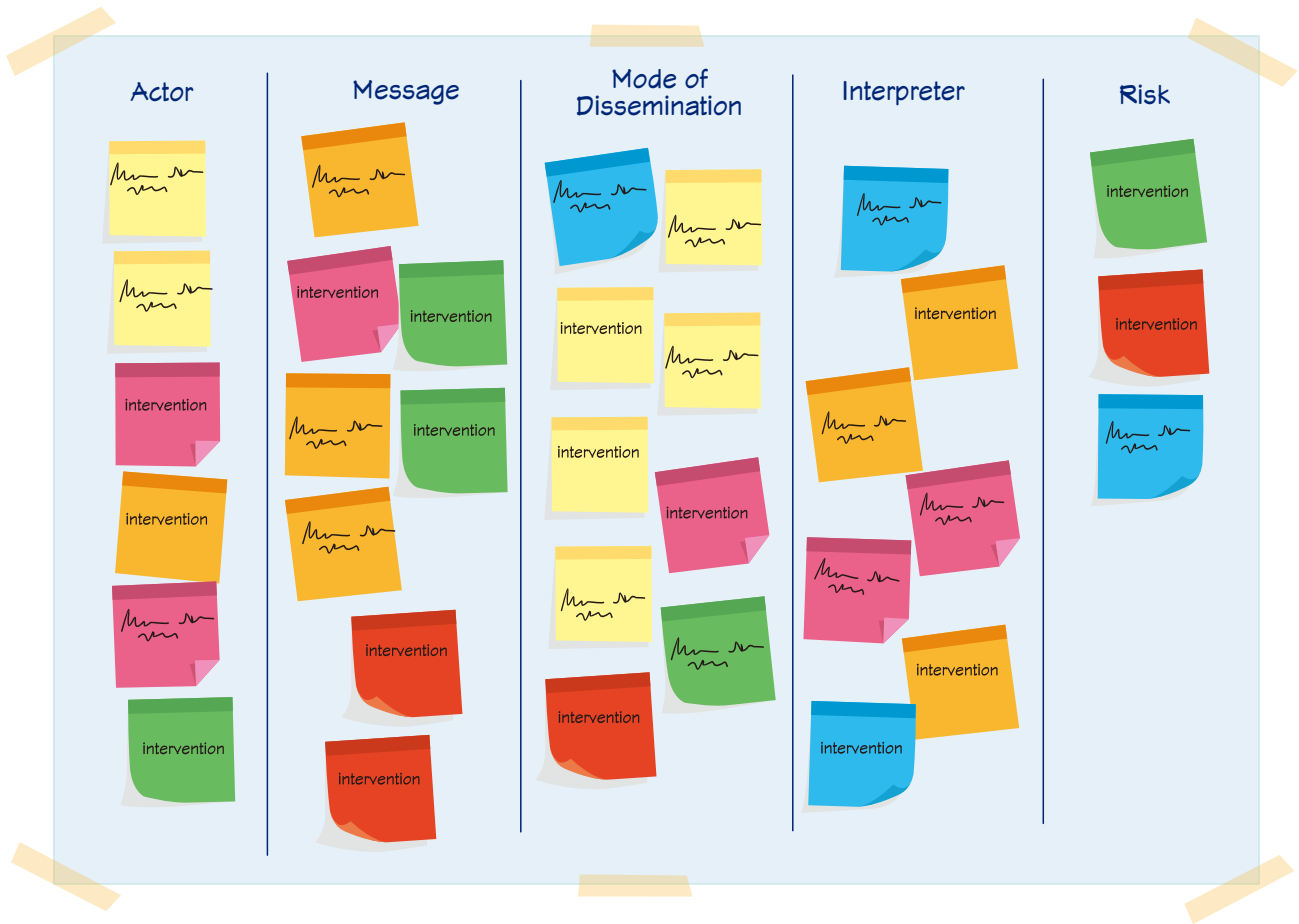
Write all needs, challenges, and gaps on sticky notes and place them above the Chain of Harm stages on the wall.

Identifying needs, challenges, and gaps can help participants to brainstorm nuanced intervention types earlier in the workshop. These will be key to the development stage for new interventions. Facilitators should continuously refer to these needs, challenges, and gaps to keep them top of mind and ensure that all intervention ideas address at least one of them.

Discussion:

- What else are you currently doing that we are missing? Where might that fit on the Chain of Harm?

- Would you say that any of your interventions focus on deterring the actors spreading DMDS?

- Would you say that any of your interventions focus on building an interpreter's ability to understand or spot DMDS?

- Would you say that any of your interventions focus on mitigating risks?

Objective: Participants begin conceiving of their work in relation to the Chain of Harm.

Option 2:

If the workshop takes place at the start of a partner's program design, before they have done any work around information integrity, this session should focus on ensuring that participants understand the types of interventions that can occur along each stage of the Chain of Harm rather than on which parts of their programs fit into these categories. To drive this understanding, the facilitators can present five or six sample interventions to help demonstrate the types of programming that the partner might consider and to help participants internalize how the Chain of Harm works. Sample interventions could include:

- Developing more effective investigation and enforcement techniques to prosecute offenders who violate hate speech laws in the Actor stage;

- Providing alternative narratives by elevating the voices of marginalized groups in public communication campaigns in the Message stage;

- Training journalists on how to investigate the credibility of online content to prevent the amplification of misinformation via traditional media sources in the Mode of Dissemination stage;

- Developing public service announcements that educate individuals to recognize and report misinformation online in the Interpreter stage; or

- Coordinating security planning by government agencies to mitigate the risk of electoral violence that may result from hate speech or disinformation connected to the election in the Risk stage.

Session 1.5: Presenting Research Findings

Presenting the findings of the survey and focus group discussions is important to ensure the interventions that come out of the workshop are data-driven and respond to actual, documented needs in the target community.

Facilitators (or whoever was involved in data collection) should prepare presentations on their findings. All data should be readily available for all participants to view and take notes on.

Objective: Participants understand findings of surveys, focus groups, and social media analysis.

Session 1.6: Translating Research Findings into Actionable Insights

Distribute copies of the data and divide participants into two to four small groups to discuss what seems noteworthy or surprising and stands out to them. One representative from each group should take notes on a flip chart.

Facilitators can ask guiding questions such as:

- Where do you notice differences in responses among different groups?

- Where would you expect to see difference in responses that don't appear?

- Are there particular stages of the Chain of Harm where the data seems to suggest different experiences for different groups?

The facilitators can moderate a discussion with the entire group to share ideas from the breakout groups before transitioning back to small groups. For this next session, ask participants to identify insights from the data that seem to suggest an action that their organization(s) could take. This is an opportunity for blue-sky thinking on actions that might improve the information environment for certain groups.

All intervention ideas should be written on a sticky note, in full sentences. If ideas are abstract, participants divide activities into steps or parts, using smaller sticky notes. Each small group should aim to present eight to 10 ideas to the larger group. They should share how each intervention might focus on a particular community or marginalized group, impact the experience of a particular community or marginalized group, or respond to a dataset or identified needs. They should then add their notes to the corresponding stages of the Chain of Harm on the wall. Facilitators should group similar ideas either while the exercise progresses or at the end of Day 1.

Objectives:

1. Participants work collaboratively to identify insights from the research.

2. Participants begin to apply insights from the research to spark ideas for new or adapted interventions.

1. People prefer face to face interaction
2. People are more confident in themselves to detect misinformation than in others
3. Older people are more confident in detecting misinformation than young people
4. People are more responsive to images
5. People are not interactive with fact checks regardless of age

Session 2.1: Day 1 Recap and Day 2 Introduction

**Objective**: Generate energy to start the day.

Session 2.2: Refine Program Adaptations

During this session, participants will refamiliarize themselves with the blue-sky programming intervention ideas that the groups generated on Day 1. Today their goal will be to identify which of those ideas they might wish to implement.

The facilitators should ask participants which ideas, if any, they are particularly excited about or would like to advocate for to the group. This will set the group up for the next activity – voting on the ideas. Advocating on behalf of certain ideas is essential to engage participants and ensure that everyone in the room is thinking critically thinking about how to put the ideas into practice.

The group will then vote, using stickers in three colors. For the first round, each participant will place a sticker of one color over the two or three ideas that most excite or interest them. With the second color, they will identify ideas that they think would best reach a currently underserved group (as determined from the data or their own experience). With the third color, they will vote for the programs that best fill a gap in their organization's current work. Facilitators should remove ideas with notably fewer (or no) stickers.

Objective: Participants narrow down interventions to begin selecting which ones they will implement.
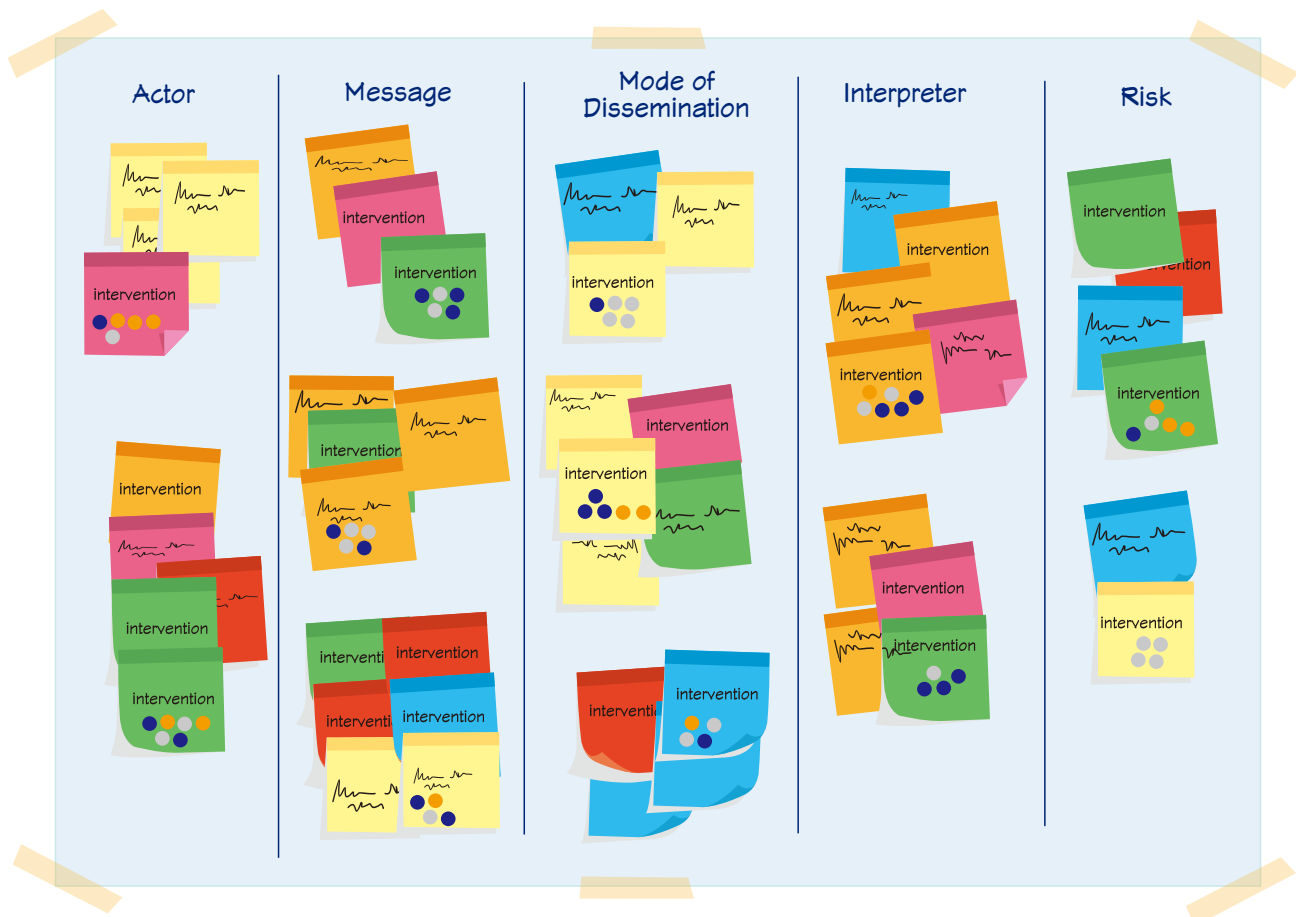
Session 2.3: Identify Top Program Ideas

This session will be crucial to narrow down potential interventions left on the wall to the top two to four. To begin, the facilitators should draw the group's attention to the four to eight ideas that received the most votes in the previous session.

This group activity considers time and funding constraints that often influence programming. To prepare for this exercise, the facilitators should tape four flip chart pages on a wall to form four quadrants with an X- and-Y axis marked at the vertical and horizontal centers of this large chart. The X (horizontal) axis will represent time intervals (for example, ranging from one to 12 months). The Y (vertical) axis will represent resources (for example, a range of costs, in the local currency).

All ideas that remain on the Chain of Harm wall will be placed in this chart. The facilitators can do so before the session and then invite participants to discuss or adjust the placement. Alternatively, the facilitators can lead a discussion to arrive at consensus about which quadrant to place each idea in. Ideas that require the longest time and greatest cost will go in the top right quadrant; those that are quicker to implement and cost less will go in the lower left quadrant. Others may fit better in the remaining quadrants.

Probing questions for this exercise can include:

- Could you add this activity to work that is already in progress?

- What additional resources are necessary for your ideal version of this idea? Is it worth discussing a pared-down version of the idea? (If so, add a separate sticky note in the appropriate quadrant.)

- In what ways would funding/time restraints affect different marginalized populations?

Once each idea is placed in a quadrant, the group should determine whether any of them could be combined into a single initiative and then evaluate where its new placement. When all final ideas are placed on the chart, ask the group if any now seem unrealistic. Through discussion, participants should attempt to reach consensus and remove any ideas they agree no longer belong on the chart. If opinions are divided, the facilitators should ask each participant to place a red sticker on any idea they think is unrealistic. Then the facilitators should remove any ideas with five or more red stickers. The note-taker should record the ideas that the group deemed unworkable, as well as changes needed to make them feasible. These can contribute to future business development ideas and proposals for participants' organizations. The goal is to end the session with no more than four ideas. If more than four remain or the group cannot reach consensus, each participant should use green stickers to vote for their top two ideas. The four with the most stickers will be used during the next session.

Objective: Participants choose the top two to four ideas they would like to implement.

Session 2.4: Building Action Plans

Option 1:
 If the group is larger, or there are three or four viable ideas, divide participants into two smaller groups. If representatives of multiple organizations are participating, ensure they are divided between the groups. Each group will discuss one idea from the chart and fill out an action plan worksheet. They will discuss questions such as:

- What would it mean to put this idea into practice?

- Who will be responsible for which tasks?

- What is the timeline for implementing the idea?

Each group will repeat the process for a second idea. The groups should take turns presenting their implementation plans to all participants and invite them to provide feedback on the plan.

Option 2:
If the group is smaller, or if there are no more than three viable ideas, the entire group can fill out the action plans together, time permitting.

Objective: Participants develop action/implementation plans for the two to four selected ideas.

Session 2.5: Monitoring and Evaluation Planning

This session allows an option for the facilitators to conduct a short monitoring and evaluation training if this makes sense. This training could include a brief explanation of why monitoring and evaluation are necessary components of the program lifecycle and cover topics such as how to develop suitable indicators, options for disaggregation, and useful data collection tools and processes.

If participants are well-versed in monitoring and evaluation, facilitators can instead work with the group to develop indicators for each final action plan created in the previous session. It is not necessary to finalize a full monitoring and evaluation plan. However, it is useful to establish enough of a foundation so that, if a project idea is actualized, participants have a strong understanding of what should be measured and how to do so.

Objective: Participants have the tools and knowledge to collect data on core program activities.

Programmatic Implementation

Overview

Once the lead organization organizes the research components and facilitates the Co-design Workshop, begin the shift toward local partner delivery or a co-delivery strategy. The lead organization should transition to a supporting role and be available for consultation with the local partner on challenges they face or for technical or subject matter expertise that the local organization may not be able to provide.

Spaces where lead organizations can best support their local partners during the program implementation phase include:

I. **Financial support.** By funding one or more of the implementation ideas, the lead organization can ensure that the program makes a start at meeting needs observed in the community. Financial support can also allow the lead organization to set certain milestones and expectations for delivery.

II. **Technical assistance and subject matter expertise.** While it is ideal for local partners to identify an implementation project that falls squarely within their area of expertise, they will likely benefit from the lead organization's broader capacities. For example, if a youth-focused local partner co-designs a media literacy campaign, the lead organization might provide media literacy training, manuals, or additional resources that the local partner can contextualize for its program.

III. **Monitoring and evaluation support.** Local partners may have limited resources for monitoring and evaluation. The lead organization can provide trainings, frameworks, and/or dashboards that enable faster, more thorough, and more effective data collection and impact analysis.

IV. **Program amplification.** By drawing on their larger and more developed communications channels, lead organizations can shed additional light on programs implemented under the guidance of their partners. This can attract additional donor attention, amplifying program impact.

V. **Network growth.** Lead organizations can act as connectors for local organizations to potential organizational partners in the same sector. Those partners may be able to contribute meaningfully to the program stream.

Best Practices

The entire Chain of Harm Co-design Workshop process works best when the lead organization has a strong and developed relationship with the local partner(s) implementing the follow-on programming – whether through the lead organization's headquarters or in-country office teams. This enables the lead organization to better understand current work, areas of expertise, and community reach; makes it easier to assess whether operationalizing the Chain of Harm will be advantageous; and allows the lead organization to offer the most effective support.

If practitioners work with lead organizations that have established in-country teams and offices, the in-country team should be the local partner's strongest ally and collaborative partner. This creates a smooth working relationship between the local partner and lead organization. Time zones are irrelevant, and in-country teams are embedded more fully into the local community, allowing for more nuanced, contextualized, and useful consultations.

As a local partner deploys its programming stream, the lead organization should check in periodically to assess progress, weigh in on any challenges or obstacles, and offer support for activities or monitoring and evaluation practices.

Since preliminary indicators for the project will be established during the Co-design Workshop, lead organizations can help expand full monitoring and evaluation plans, if needed. Use pre- and post-activity surveys and tests to measure knowledge gains and assess confidence levels. Conducting follow-up, evaluation-focused focus group discussions with program participants is an effective way to obtain feedback and additional qualitative data. Lead organizations should hold sessions with local partner leaders upon completion of milestone activities and the entire project cycle to derive lessons learned.

Measurement and Evaluation

This segment addresses the importance of measurement and evaluation through the lifecycle of the entire Chain of Harm process, from focus group research to program implementation and beyond. This helps meet the goal of creating localized, co-designed, responsive programming. Best practices for measuring this impact rely on robust data collection at each discrete stage of the process.

Qualitative data is often more useful than quantitative data for assessing the impact of this process. Much of this data can be collected via surveys and follow-on focus group discussions with program participants and implementers. Qualitative feedback obtained through ongoing working relationships provides nuanced insights into how implementers and participants respond to and engage with the Chain of Harm. Strong relationships with implementing partners can foster sustained collaboration on information integrity programming and opportunities to maintain thinking in the Chain of Harm mindset after this initial process.

Traditional evaluation methods can be used to measure the success of programmatic implementations. However, the Chain of Harm can also be utilized as an evaluation framework for its own activities through the Chain of Harm Evaluation Workshop, described in *The Chain of Harm: Designing Evidence-based, Locally Led Information Integrity Programming.*

Annex

Focus Group Content Examples

Example of Misinformation

Example of Counter Message

Ministry of Human Services and Social Security
September 1 · 🌐

STATEMENT: Guyana Daily News Post

The Ministry of Human Services and Social Security would like to correct an inaccuracy that is being posted by a social media account under the name "Guyana Daily News."

The facts are as follows:... See more

Statement
Guyana Daily News Post

The Ministry of Human Services and Social Security would like to correct an inaccuracy that is being posted by a social media account under the name "Guyana Daily News."

The facts are as follows:

-The Ministry of Human Services received the list of children who have registered with the National Commission on Disability for each region.

-In some cases, names were absent BUT NOT REFUSED.

- Systems were put in place and the process was CLEARLY explained at every distribution site. There is a desk at each location where those names that were omitted could be captured on a new list. Those children would not have to re-register, nor were they refused.

- The names that were inadvertently omitted were placed on this list and within one month, ALL OF THOSE BENEFICIARIES WITH PERMANENT DISABILITY WILL RECEIVE THE CASH GRANT. This applied to ALL regions in Guyana.

- ALL of this has been explained by the Minister of Human Services and Social Security, Hon. Dr Vindhya Persaud at every location and emphasized by the staff of the Ministry to the audience at large and individually. (All such announcements have been published on the Ministry's official Facebook page).

AT NO POINT, ANY CHILD WITH A PERMANENT DISABILITY WAS REFUSED.

We hope that Guyana Daily News could have carried out basic journalistic practices and reached out to any of the Ministry's contact numbers or even visit the distribution site to witness first-hand the smooth and transparent process.

September 1st, 2022

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