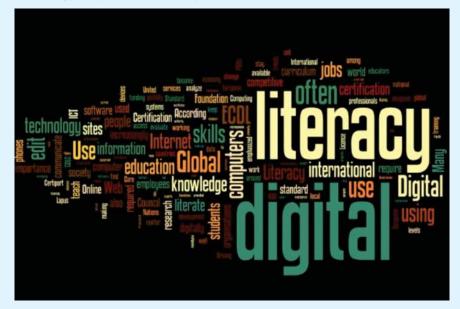
MITIGATION STRATEGIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Mitigating the impact of mis/disinformation requires a multifaceted approach involving individuals, communities, technology platforms, and policymakers



edia and Information Literacy and education: Government at all tiers, civil society organisations and international organisations should promote media and information literacy pro-grammes among citizens to empower them to critically analyse and evaluate media messages and make informed judgments on information sources. Media and information literacy programmes should be included in the curriculum of schools from primary school to tertiary institutions to inculcate consciousness of the relevance of information to development and democracy.

The ability to critically relate with media and information in general, technically called media and information literacy, has now become essential the same way literacy became essential in fighting illiteracy centuries ago. Media and information literacy (MIL) skills empower citizens, particularly young people who are the digital majority, on how best to use the social media to overcome the menace of mis/disinformation during elections and in other areas of life. To this end, training institutions should be empowered to engage in training of youth, students, teachers, and practitioners in the information and communication ecosystem.

Conventional mainstream media (print and electronic) should adhere strictly to journalism ethics and professionalism in reportage and information dissemination by making correct and true information readily available to citizens. The mainstream media must ensure that information is disseminated to the public to solely protect the public interest. There appears to be wide scepticism about the willingness of mainstream media, for different reasons, including ownership structure, to provide the public the information they need, fuelling a strong belief among citizens that authentic information can only be sourced from social media. Once the conventional media platforms adhere strictly to professionalism and ethics as the guiding principle, there would be less enthusiasm among citizens to either use social media for sharing information or solely rely on the credibility of the information disseminated on/by social media.

Fact-checking: The government, civil society organisations, international partners and other critical stakeholders must make a concerted effort to establish fact-checking organisations that would help citizens to verify information and equally debunk falsehood or propaganda. This would help to contain the excesses that are associated with social media. Awareness must also be created to fact-check information before it is taken as a fact and shared.

Establishment of a National Media Commission: Government must consider the creation of this Commission to sanitise the information ecosystem. This Commission should compose of



government nominees, representatives of civil society organisations, the media, educational and research institutions, religious bodies, and other critical stakeholders, to ensure the social media space is closely monitored to ensure that it is not used for purposes that undermine credible information dissemination. The Commission must not be under the absolute control of the government and must be seen as an ombudsman.

Social Media regulation: It is important that government must initiate measures to regulate social media. Such intervention measures must be divested of political consideration so as not to muzzle and fetter social media and freedom of expression. Relevant stakeholders must be involved and listened to at every step that would lead to this decision to ensure that intervention measures are products of inclusive and participatory deliberations. The objective of these regulatory measures would be to curb the spread of mis/disinformation on social media platforms.

Responsible and Responsive Journalism: Inclusive intervention measures must be taken by the government and relevant stakeholders to encourage media platforms to consider objectivity, impartiality and accurate information as not only important to reporting but also to the sustenance of society and democracy. This would ensure the cultivation of responsible self-censorship culture to check information that could be damaging to the democratic process and national cohesion.

Partnership with tech companies: Government and relevant stakeholders must ensure they work and collaborate with technology companies on content



moderation. This would allow a process of filtering the information mechanism system before it becomes detrimental to society as a whole.

Data-based Monitoring Mechanism: The government and relevant stakeholders must consider an effective process through which data-based organisations are central to containment measures that would either pull down inflammatory stories that promote hate speech or divide the society along ethnoreligious cleavages. Setting up a mis/disinformation observatory manned by civil society organisations has become imperative.

This will enable citizens to track and counter mis/disinformation and also name and shame institutions and individuals involved in the act. This role cannot be left for government to avoid the observatory being used for political interest. There is an urgent need to support civil society organisation, including religious organisations, to lead c a m p a i g n s a g a i n s t mis/disinformation during elections.

Legal Action: Government must enforce measures against those who are found guilty spreading mis/disinformation. Such deterrent measures must be divested of political interests.

Intensification of advocacy for policy change and diligent enforcement of existing regulations, laws on media practice, including the law of libel. In most cases it is the failure to enforce existing legal frameworks that fuel impunity.