THE PACIFIC COVID-19 INFODEMIC

Infodemic: the rapid spread of information about a topic—including content that is true, false, and unclear—that makes it hard to know what to believe.

CHALLENGES

Informal social media communities, chat groups, and individuals with large online followings fill public's demand for news and updates.

Despite proactive efforts from governments, discourse is muddied by conspiracy theories and misconceptions.

Pacific journalists are working hard, but lack of scientific knowledge, emergency laws that limit what they can cover, and economic constraints limit impact.

The scramble to address Covid-19 misinformation led to ad-hoc applications of legislation and policing to a very complex issue.

MISSING PIECES

Safeguards that protect users online, including anti-abuse systems and transparency tools.

Media capacity, training, and access to provide quality reporting and correct falsehoods.

Strategies, policies, and frameworks to govern online information ecosystems.

OPPORTUNITIES

Strengthen official credibility and visibility online.
Within governments, stronger technical capacity and greater focus on online information-sharing will improve the credibility and accessibility of official information.

Productive, multi- stakeholder approaches to misinformation.
Add richer context into online discussions and instill greater digital and media literacy among Pacific communities. Civil society can play a leading role in fact-checking, media production, knowledge transfer, and education for local communities and vulnerable groups.

Prepare for new and emerging threats to online information ecosystems.
Strengthen local and regional capacity to identify and report problematic content online; improve coordination and dialogue across institutions and governments; and enhance engagement between social media companies and Pacific leaders.