

# FIELD

*#DEFYHATENOW*

**Social Media  
Hate Speech  
Mitigation**

**CAMEROON**

SECOND EDITION 2021

# GUIDE

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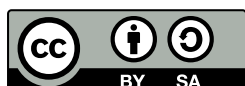
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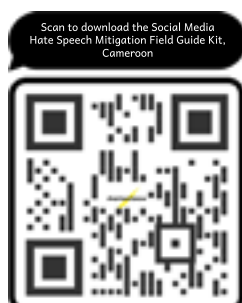
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# Cameroon FIELD GUIDE

## #HATEFREECAMEROON

**#defyhatenow Cameroon** exists to strengthen the voices of the youth, communities, and media-focused organizations and to support them in their work.

Together, we aim to counter the hate speech, conflict rhetoric, and incitement to violence that is spread on social media platforms and online in response to **Cameroon's Anglophone conflict**.

The project provides capacity-building and media literacy training to enable community-based organizations and citizens, including people displaced by conflict, to become positive influencers. **#defyhatenow** teaches skills related to counteraction, fact-checking, early response monitoring, peacebuilding through art and tech, and trauma healing. Our goal is to spread positive, tolerant, peaceful messages online in order to be a counterforce to the agents of conflict posting online.

Since 2019 the **rOg\_agency for open culture & critical transformation gGmbH**, in partnership with the **UNESCO Multisectoral Regional Office for Central Africa** in Yaoundé and with the support of the German Federal Foreign Office, has been mandated under the initiative of **#defyhatenow** to address the way the internet is fueling the country's crisis. Our in-country and international **#defyhatenow** teams and conflict specialists have been acting to address the civil conflicts and destabilization issues, including violent extremism and internal displacement, that have been fueled through hate speech on social media platforms. Our teams have also been working to mitigate the intentional disinformation spread regarding the **Covid-19 pandemic** that has exacerbated the conflict.

**#defyhatenow** engages people from all walks of life in order to create a peacebuilding framework. We are working to bridge gaps of knowledge and awareness about how social media works between those with easy access to technology and knowledge and those without.

Through the grant provided by the **German Federal Foreign Office**, the peacebuilding mission of **#defyhatenow** has been enabled to keep the many conflict mitigation conversations going, develop

resources that are free and easy to access online, including this **Social Media Hate Speech Mitigation Field Guide**. Their grant has also allowed us to support local activists and peace-oriented media-based activities in local communities.

## #DEFYHATENOW BACKGROUND

**#defyhatenow** was initiated in early 2014 by the **rOg\_agency for open culture and critical transformation gGmbH (Berlin)** and initially focused its work on South Sudan, with support from the German Federal Foreign Office via the ifa/zivik program for civic conflict resolution. In 2016 the program expanded to include Kenya, Uganda, and Sudan and later, Ethiopia. Alongside social media literacy training, community activities and trainings on hate speech and conflict mitigation, **#defyhatenow** produced a comprehensive **Social Media Hate Speech Mitigation Field Guide**. In 2019 **#defyhatenow** began work in Cameroon in response to the Anglophone conflict.

This Field Guide is a toolkit to work together for compassion and tolerance - online and offline.



# Historical Background

The current Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon and the longstanding tensions between the anglophone and francophone communities are rooted in Cameroon's colonial past. Before independence, Cameroon was administered as two separate entities by Britain and France, who were granted control of the former German colonial territory of Kamerun at the end of World War I.

Each territory thus came under a new foreign language, with English and French replacing German as official languages. The territories also had different political, administrative, educational, and legal systems. Different ways of life developed under French and British administration.

The British territories (there were two non-connected territories) in the western area made up about 20% of the total land area of today's Cameroon. The larger territory administered by France made up 80% of the land area.

The territory under French administration gained independence in 1960. The territories under British administration gained independence in 1961 and voted to join French Cameroon, thereby forming the Federal Republic of Cameroon.

Today, those who are from the territories formerly administered by Britain are referred to as Anglophones. Those who are from the territory formerly under the French administration are referred to as Francophones.

In the decades since independence and reunification, the government has been exclusively under francophone rule. Anglophones have been frustrated by the francophone majority in government and their self-interested allocation of socio-economic amenities.

Over the years, the government has worked towards erasing anglophone cultural heritage, trying to ban the use of English in schools and courts. This has been met with anglophone resistance. In 2016, this conflict reached a tipping point, with protests by anglophone teachers and lawyers escalating into the present-day separatist armed conflict.

The differences between anglophone and francophone cultures has become the basis for negative stereotyping.

These stereotypes, along with escalating language tensions, have given rise to violence and hate speech. Our goal at #defyhatenow is to teach people how to mitigate hate speech online and spread messages of peace, tolerance, and reconciliation.

For more detailed background information on the Anglophone Crisis, here are some suggested links:

<https://theconversation.com/history-explains-why-cameroon-is-at-war-with-itself-over-language-and-culture-85401>

<https://africacenter.org/spotlight/understanding-camerouns-crisis-of-governance/>

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333613485\\_CAMEROON'S\\_UNFOLDING\\_CATASTROPHE\\_Evidence\\_of\\_Human\\_Rights\\_Violations\\_and\\_Crimes\\_against\\_Humanity](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333613485_CAMEROON'S_UNFOLDING_CATASTROPHE_Evidence_of_Human_Rights_Violations_and_Crimes_against_Humanity)

## SOCIAL MEDIA HATE SPEECH MITIGATION FIELD GUIDE

The #defyhatenow Social Media Hate Speech Mitigation Field Guide offers tools and strategies that can be used by individuals and entire communities to engage in peacebuilding activities online, locally and around the world. This booklet is designed for use 'in the field' and includes training materials and workshop resources designed to raise awareness, develop counter-narratives, and mitigate violence related to online hate speech.

*"Incitement to violence is very specific, in that it needs strategic action to counter and requires community leaders and citizens to become involved and engaged in direct actions to mitigate the threat of violence erupting. While hate speech can form a basis for incitement, one can still use personal strategies to engage with speakers, bring down the tone of rhetoric, and shift attitudes. Group strategies are needed to respond as a community to dangerous speech online and mitigate the factors contributing to violence offline."*

**Stephen Kovats, r0g\_agency, Berlin**

# Contents

**Introduction**

**01 Social Media and Conflict**

**02 Social Media Use and Fact-Checking**

**03 Peacebuilding through Art and Technology**

**04 Identity**

**05 Mental Health, Trauma, and Healing**

**06 Common Hate Speech Expressions in Cameroon**

**Facilitator Notes**

**Credits**

# Social Media and Conflict

# Contents

## Hate Speech

- Hate Speech, a Definition
- Hate Speech and Violence
- Hate Speech vs. Dangerous Speech
- Hate Speech Laws
- Hate Speech Laws in Cameroon
- Hate Speech Online

## Hate Speech Targets

- Tribal Groups
- Women
- The LGBTQ+ Community

## Social Media Platforms

- Hate Speech Guidelines across Platforms
- How to Report Hate Speech



*A meet up session with students of GBHS SODIKO\_Bonaberi on how they can engage their communities against hate speech.  
Photo by Angela Okon*



# Social Media and Conflict

The #defyhatenow project works to mitigate hate speech online and spread positive, peaceful alternatives to hate.

Before we can talk about positive alternatives, we first have to talk about what hate speech is and why it is such a threat to peace.

Understanding this is the goal of this chapter.

## Hate Speech

### A Definition

When we talk about any term, such as **hate speech**, the first step is always to create a working definition of what that term means to us.

*Here is the definition adopted by the European Court of Human Rights:*

“Hate speech is all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote, or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility towards minorities, migrants, and people of immigrant origin.”

*A simpler way to state this is:*

“Hate speech is all communication that attacks people and describes them as less valuable, less good, or less deserving of full participation in society and hate speech makes these verbal attacks because the target is a member of a particular group.”

*And an even simpler way:*

“Hate speech is speech marked by hatred of someone else because of their membership in a group.”

It is important to note that hate speech focuses on disdain for people based on a group they belong to. It is not about a conflict between two individual people, based on their personal relationship, but rather hatred towards an entire group of people. This is what makes hate speech so dangerous, because it easily escalates into larger conflicts.

### **Hate speech can be spoken, written, or conveyed through images.**

In this Field Guide, along with talking about how to counter hate speech, we will also talk about how to counter communication that fosters a climate of prejudice and intolerance – what you might think of as hateful speech. While hateful speech does not meet the definition of being serious enough to be hate speech, this kind of communication may fuel discrimination, hostility, and violent attacks later on and always has a negative effect on communities.



### ► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

- Which of these definitions makes the most sense to you? Can you describe what hate speech is, in your own words?
- What groups in your area are most often the target of hate speech?
- How do you think hate speech affects the people who are targeted?

## Hate Speech and Violence

**So now that we know what hate speech is, the question is, why does it matter?**

The simple answer is that words have profound power to either bring communities and countries together or to tear them apart and fuel conflicts, wars, and genocides.

When we look back to violent acts that took place in the past, we see that they did not start with actions, they started with words. That is why we need to work together to end the spread of hate speech, so that violence does not erupt and people are not hurt.

**But how exactly does hate speech lead to violent conflict?**

To better understand this, here is an image that shows how the cycle of hate speech intensifies and how the more often it cycles through, the more it intensifies.

### ► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

- When looking at the image above, you can see that these cycles happen because the person hearing hate speech responds with anger or revenge. But how could you instead stop the cycle, even if hate speech is directed at you? What reactions would have a different, more positive outcome?
- What effect do you think hearing hate speech has on your community? Does it increase or decrease your levels of trust in other people? Levels of anger? Feelings of revenge?
- How does listening to hate speech or dangerous speech on the radio, in person, or online make you feel?
- What could you do to stop the spread of hate speech in your own community, your family, or school?

## Hate Speech vs. Dangerous Speech

Dangerous Speech is any form of expression (speech, text, or images) that can increase the risk that its audience will condone or commit violence against members of another group.

### When does hate speech become dangerous speech?

So far, we have talked about hate speech and how it can fuel conflicts. When hate speech is combined with a call to action, it turns from hate speech to dangerous speech.

What is dangerous speech? Dangerous speech is any communication that calls for people to condone, or take part in, violence against another group or members of that group. Violence means causing bodily harm to someone else.

What is important about dangerous speech is that it includes committing (acting on) and condoning (approving of) violence. The reason dangerous speech includes both acting on and approving of violence: when there is large-scale violence between people, only a small proportion of people, usually young men, carry out violence. However, people close to them - such as family members, friends, and teachers - often approve of and encourage the violence.

When a society suffers major intergroup violence, a few commit the violence and many stand by, watching and approving of it.

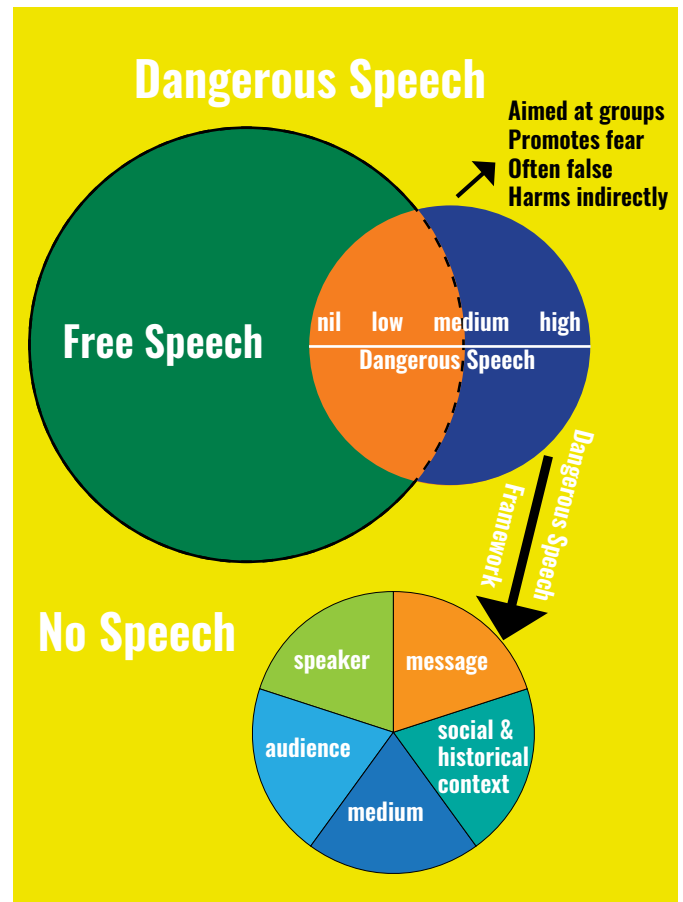
This also means that when people stand by and witness violence, other people assume they are approving of it. So if you don't approve, speak up! The more vocal the non-approving voices become, the harder it is for dangerous speech to take hold.

If we look at past outbreaks of violence, we can see that dangerous speech rises steadily before outbreaks of mass violence. Often, a few influential speakers gradually incite a group to violence. This means that violence can often be prevented by interfering with this process:

- We could try to inhibit the speech, not letting the speaker share the dangerous speech message.
- We could try to limit how widely the message is spread.
- We could work to undermine the credibility of the speaker.
- We could teach people how to recognize dangerous speech and why calls to violence should not be listened to, so that the speech has less impact on the listener.

In general, it is easiest to identify dangerous speech that comes just before violence is about to break out. Its meaning tends to be clear and it often calls for and directly endorses violence.

Years or months earlier, dangerous speech is often expressed in much less clear language, so that both its meaning and its impact are less obvious. The calls to violence are not as obvious. But we should still take any speeches seriously that imply violence is the solution to problems.



Source: <https://dangerousspeech.org/guide/>

## ► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

- Can you explain the difference between hate speech and dangerous speech?
- If you come across dangerous speech, how could you try to interfere to prevent violence?
- In most cultures, violence is committed by young men. Knowing this, what are some things we could do to prevent these young men from being infected by dangerous speech, if they come across it? What are some preventative steps we can take?

## Hate Speech Laws

Most people don't realize that many countries have laws prohibiting hate speech. Hate speech laws were created in Europe after World War II (1939–1945) when countries were confronting the fact that millions of Jews were murdered by their governments during the war, a genocide known as the Holocaust or Shoah. During the Holocaust, people who had ethnic or religious ties to the tribe of Israel were murdered solely because they belonged to that group. But the Holocaust did not start with genocide – it started with the dominant group fueling hatred through targeted hate speech. So laws banning hate speech were created after the war. Governments realized that by not allowing hate speech to be spread, you could prevent fighting, genocide, and wars.

Countries such as Germany and Austria passed hate speech laws decades ago. Many other countries have since followed. For example, under Kenyan law, a person commits an offense if they stir up "ethnic hatred". France goes further, forbidding any communication intended to incite discrimination, hatred, or harm with regards to ethnicity, nation, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or handicap.

## Hate Speech Laws in Cameroon

Did you know that in 2019, Cameroon also passed a law prohibiting hate speech?  
The law in its full form is listed below.

The hate speech law, passed on 24 December 2019, is an amendment of Law No. 2016/7 of 12 July 2016 relating to the Penal Code for hate speech.

### SECTION 1

**Law No. 2016/7 of 12 July 2016 relating to the Penal Code is hereby amended and supplemented as follows: Section 241: (new) Contempt of race or religion.**

- 1 Whoever commits a contempt, within the meaning of Section 152 of this Code, of the race or religion of one or many citizens or residents shall be punished with imprisonment for from 6 (six) months and with fine of from 5 000 (five thousand) francs to 500 000 (five hundred thousand) Francs.**
- 2 Where the offence is committed by means of the press or wireless, radio, television or social media or any other means likely to reach the public, the maximum of the fine provided for in subsection 1**

**above may extend to 20 000 000 (twenty million) Francs.**

- 3 Where the offence is committed with intent to arouse hatred or contempt between citizens, or residents, the penalties provided by the foregoing subsections shall be doubled.**

### SECTION 241-1

**(new) contempt of Tribe or ethnic group.**

- 1 Whoever, by any means, makes hate speech against people or incites them to violence due to their tribal or ethnic origin shall be punished with imprisonment of from 1 (one) to 2 (two) years and with fine of 300 000 (three hundred thousand) francs to 3 000 000 (three million) francs.**
- 2 Where the benefit of mitigating circumstances is given, the punishment provided for in Subsection 1 above shall not be less than 3 (three) months imprisonment and the fine shall not be less than 200 000 (two hundred thousand) francs. Execution shall not be suspended except in case of diminished responsibility of infancy.**
- 3 Where the author of the hate speech is a Public Servant as per the provisions of Section 131 of this Code, leader of a political party, of the media, of a Non-Governmental Organisation or a religious institution, the punishment provided for in subsection 1 above shall be doubled and the benefit of mitigating circumstances shall not be given.**

### SECTION 77

**Law no. 2010/12 relating to Cyber Security and Cyber Criminality.**

This is a law on cyber-crime that punishes hate speech with imprisonment for up to 5 years and up to a fine of 5 Million francs for anyone disseminating hate speech online.

*Source: <https://www.prc.cm/en/multimedia/documents/8027-law-2019-020-of-24-december-2019>*

## ► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

- Did you know that there were laws forbidding hate speech?
- Do you feel these laws are enforced by the authorities?
- Could you ask your government officials to make enforcing hate speech laws a priority?

## Hate Speech Online

While it is important to have laws forbidding hate speech, whether the laws are enforced or not varies widely between countries. Many countries respond to hate speech in printed form, but have a hard time with online hate speech. There is so much content online across all social media platforms and on the

internet. This makes it hard for any one government to monitor everything.

What this means is that even though there are laws forbidding it, hate speech is still often shared and reposted on social media. It is therefore your responsibility as users of social media and websites to make sure that we do not post or share hate messages and to report messages of hate that we come across to the platform.

# Hate Speech Targets

Hate speech, both in person and online, attacks many people, but there are some groups that are more often the target of hate speech than others. Below, we will look at three of these groups and discuss what actions we can take to help minimize the impact of hate speech against these groups.

## Tribal Groups

Tribalism is defined as the behaviors and attitudes that are a result of having an identity strongly defined by the tribe someone belongs to. Tribalism creates a way of seeing the world that leads people in one tribe to see themselves as separate, distinct, and often better than people from another tribe.

Members of a tribe traditionally have strong loyalties to their tribe, because tribes foster strong relationships among its members. These relationships are based on proximity, kinship, and the mutual survival of both the individual and the tribe itself.

In return, tribes demand loyalty. The feeling of belonging depends on knowing who is part of the tribe and who is not. Tribes foster the us-versus-them thinking that we will discuss in chapter 4 on Identity.

Cameroon is one of Africa's most diverse countries. There is the country's Anglophone – Francophone divide, but there are also over 250 other groups that create a complex patchwork of affiliations and tribal identities. An ethnic Anglophone, for example, is a person whose ethnic roots are in the former British Southern Cameroons, as opposed to a linguistic Anglophone, meaning an ethnic Francophone Cameroonian who through education or socialization speaks English.

Against this backdrop, hate speech against linguistic and tribal groups has often been used by politicians seeking their own gain. Most violence and atrocities in

Cameroon today are based on tribal conflicts. These conflicts continue to destabilize the country and harm many people.

On social media, mis- and disinformation, along with hate and hateful speech, have become common. False allegations spread rapidly online and members of other groups are often dehumanized and people try to incite hatred across borders.

What can be done? First off, report any hate speech you come across online.

And keep in mind that while we all long for the safety and feeling of belonging, we don't have to resort to tribalism. Our desire to belong to a group can also lead us to other actions, such as wanting to be part of a group that works together, cooperates, embraces diversity, and helps other people who are different from us but united through our joint humanity.

*Source: <https://www.rightsforpeace.org/post/fanning-the-flames-hate-speech-and-elections-in-cameroon>*

## ► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

- Have you or someone you know been attacked online because of your ethnicity or tribe?
- What actions could you take to make members of the targeted groups feel safer online?
- What could you do to promote cooperation between groups?

## Women

Women are disproportionately the target of hate speech online and other gender-based violence, making the online and offline worlds far less safe for women than for men.

Online, women are far more likely to be verbally attacked, degraded, threatened, and harassed than their male counterparts are.



Tanya O'Carroll, the director of Amnesty Tech, calls online abuse a form of censorship. "Especially given that Facebook, Twitter, and others talk about the fact that they're mainly there to promote freedom of expression, they're very reluctant to take down content," she says. "These platforms are talking about the censorship consequences of removing content, but what about the censorship consequences of this kind of targeted harassment? What are the net consequences of silencing women in this very orchestrated way? Women turning off their accounts or turning away from sharing specific kinds of content, for example sharing political views - those are also censorship consequences," says O'Carroll.

Insults, public shaming, intimidation, hacking, and cyber-stalking are behaviors that women are often confronted with on the Internet. Women in leadership positions, politics, and journalism have been targeted by online violence and hate speech and have experienced the wrath of online abuse, threats, and bullying.

But not using these platforms is not the answer. As Gomolemo Rasesigo from Gender Links Botswana says, "we cannot run away from social media." Especially in politics, female candidates need social media to help reach out to potential voters and increase awareness of the issues at stake. So the solution is not to stop women from using platforms, but rather for all of us to work towards making it safer for women. How? By reporting all bullying and harassment we witness online.

Another very common violence against women online is harassment through stalking, sex chats and video calls, demands for nudes, hacking, threats for extortion, and the sharing of non-consensual pornography (commonly known as revenge porn).

Non-consensual pornography can happen because individuals, at one point in a relationship, share photos with each other. Yet when the relationship ends, these women are blackmailed into transferring money or having the photos posted online. At times, women are also targeted with the threat of photos being leaked, even though they are photoshopped images and not real. But the fear of these fake photos being online is nonetheless terrifying for these women. This trauma often forces women to deactivate profiles, effectively shutting them out of the online world.

## ► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

- Have you or someone you know been the target of hate or hateful speech online based on being a woman?
- Why do you think women in positions of power are more likely than their male counterparts to be attacked online?
- What could you do to make the online world safer for women?

## LGBTQ+ Community

Discrimination and harassment are constant problems for LGBTQ+ Cameroonians. They are at risk of imprisonment and extortion by law enforcement officials. Some gay men have even been entrapped by neighbors or acquaintances conspiring to report them, which creates a climate of distrust and fear. Many LGBTQ+ Cameroonians believe the only way to protect themselves is to hide their sexuality, especially since the 2005 arrests when the media began to portray being gay or lesbian as a menace to public safety.

Cameroon's laws criminalize consensual same-sex conduct under article 347(1) of the Penal Code, which punishes sexual relations with a person of the same sex with up to five years in prison. Laws pertaining to the online world also exist, including Article 83(1), which states that any person who makes sexual propositions to a person of their sex through electronic communications shall be punished with imprisonment of up to two years and a fine of up to 1,000,000 CFA francs or only one of these two penalties. The penalties are doubled if the proposals have been followed by sexual intercourse.

What this means is that members of the LGBTQ+ community are not only legally discriminated against, but this also makes them a particularly vulnerable target for hate speech online, which has in recent years also led to physical violence targeting LGBTQ+ individuals.

The same advice for countering hate speech against this community applies: Report all harassment and hate speech you see online.

Source:  
<https://www.refugeelegalaidinformation.org/cameroon-lgbti-resources>

## ► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

- What actions could you take to make women and members of the LGBTQ+ community feel safer online?

# Social Media Platforms

In this chapter, we have defined what hate speech, hateful speech, and dangerous speech is. We have also talked about hate speech laws and identified some common targets of hate speech. And we have said that when you come across hate speech online, you should report it. But how does that work? Below, we give you instructions.

In Cameroon, the most widely used social media platform is Facebook, accounting for about 85% of social media usage. Other platforms, such as Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, and TikTok are also gaining users, but Facebook is undoubtedly the most used platform in Cameroon. The messaging app WhatsApp is also very popular.

Since these are the platforms most used, this is also where you are most likely to encounter hate speech. Because these platforms are owned by private companies, what they consider hate speech and how you report hate speech varies from platform to platform.

## Hate Speech Guidelines across Platforms

**Below are the guidelines for each platform. The text is taken directly from the platform's website.**

### Facebook / Instagram says:

We define hate speech as a direct attack against people - rather than concepts or institutions - on the basis of what we call protected characteristics: race, ethnicity, national origin, disability, religious affiliation, caste, sexual orientation, sex, gender identity and serious disease. We define attacks as violent or dehumanizing speech, harmful stereotypes, statements of inferiority, expressions of contempt, disgust or dismissal, cursing and calls for exclusion or segregation. We also prohibit the use of harmful stereotypes, which we define as dehumanizing comparisons that have historically been used to attack, intimidate, or exclude specific groups, and that are often linked with offline violence. We consider age a protected characteristic when referenced along with another protected characteristic. We also protect refugees, migrants, immigrants and asylum seekers from the most severe attacks, though we do allow commentary and criticism of immigration policies. Similarly, we provide some protections for characteristics like occupation, when they're

referenced along with a protected characteristic. Sometimes, based on local nuance, we consider certain words or phrases as code words for PC groups.

We recognize that people sometimes share content that includes someone else's hate speech to condemn it or raise awareness. In other cases, speech that might otherwise violate our standards can be used self-referentially or in an empowering way. Our policies are designed to allow room for these types of speech, but we require people to clearly indicate their intent. If the intention is unclear, we may remove the content.

We aim to prevent potential offline harm that may be related to content on Facebook. While we understand that people commonly express disdain or disagreement by threatening or calling for violence in non-serious ways, we remove language that incites or facilitates serious violence. We remove content, disable accounts and work with law enforcement when we believe there is a genuine risk of physical harm or direct threats to public safety.

### YouTube says:

At the heart of our approach are the four Rs: we Remove content that violates our policies as quickly as possible, Reduce the spread of harmful misinformation and content that brushes up against our policy lines, Raise up authoritative sources when people are looking for news and information, and Reward trusted, eligible Creators and artists.

Hate speech is not allowed on YouTube. We remove content promoting violence or hatred against individuals or groups based on any of the following attributes: Age, Caste, Disability, Ethnicity, Gender Identity and Expression, Nationality, Race, Immigration Status, Religion, Sex/Gender, Sexual Orientation, Victims of a major violent event and their kin, Veteran Status. If you find content that violates this policy, report it.

### WhatsApp says:

You will not use (or assist others in using) WhatsApp in ways that [...] are illegal, obscene, defamatory, threatening, intimidating, harassing, hateful, racially or ethnically offensive, or instigate or encourage conduct that would be illegal or otherwise inappropriate, such as promoting violent crimes, endangering or exploiting children or others, or coordinating harm; or involve publishing falsehoods, misrepresentations, or misleading statements.

**Twitter says:**

Hateful conduct: You may not promote violence against or directly attack or threaten other people on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, caste, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, religious affiliation, age, disability, or serious disease. We also do not allow accounts whose primary purpose is inciting harm towards others on the basis of these categories.

Violent threats: We prohibit content that makes violent threats against an identifiable target. Violent threats are declarative statements of intent to inflict injuries that would result in serious and lasting bodily harm, where an individual could die or be significantly injured, e.g., "I will kill you."

Note: we have a zero-tolerance policy against violent threats. Those deemed to be sharing violent threats will face immediate and permanent suspension of their account.

**TikTok says:**

TikTok is a diverse and inclusive community that has no tolerance for discrimination. We do not permit content that contains hate speech or involves hateful behavior and we remove it from our platform. We suspend or ban accounts that engage in hate speech violations or which are associated with hate speech off the TikTok platform.

We define hate speech or behavior as content that attacks, threatens, incites violence against, or otherwise dehumanizes an individual or a group on the basis of the following protected attributes: Race, Ethnicity, National Origin, Religion, Caste, Sexual orientation, Sex, Gender, Gender identity, Serious disease, Disability, Immigration status.

Do not post, upload, stream, or share hateful content related to an individual or group, including:

- claiming that they are physically, mentally, or morally inferior
- calling for or justifying violence against them
- claiming that they are criminals
- referring to them as animals, inanimate objects, or other non-human entities
- promoting or justifying exclusion, segregation, or discrimination against them
- content that depicts harm inflicted upon an individual or a group on the basis of a protected attribute

**Slurs**

Slurs are defined as derogatory terms that are intended to disparage an ethnicity, race, or any other protected attributes listed above. To minimize the

spread of egregiously offensive terms, we remove all slurs from our platform, unless the terms are reappropriated, used self-referentially (e.g., in a song), or do not disparage. Do not post, upload, stream, or share content that uses or includes slurs.

**Hateful ideology**

Hateful ideologies are those that demonstrate clear hostility toward people because of their protected attributes. Hateful ideologies are incompatible with the inclusive and supportive community that our platform provides and we remove content that promotes them.

Do not post, upload, stream, or share:

- Content that praises, promotes, glorifies, or supports any hateful ideology.
- Content that contains names, symbols, logos, flags, slogans, uniforms, gestures, salutes, illustrations, portraits, songs, music, lyrics, or other objects related to a hateful ideology.
- Content that denies well-documented and violent events have taken place affecting groups with protected attributes.
- Claims of supremacy over a group of people with reference to other protected attributes.
- Conspiracy theories used to justify hateful ideologies.

## How to Report Hate Speech

Social media platforms continue to find new ways to monitor and counter hate speech on their platforms. It is therefore always a good idea to flag and report any hate speech you come across. Social media platforms keep updating their user interface, so if the instructions below don't seem to work, updated information can always be found online.

Most often, there is some icon next to the post (dots, arrow, etc) that you can click and then select **Report** from a drop-down menu.

Below are links to the Help Pages for the various platforms. You can find help and answers to questions there.

**Facebook Help Page**

<https://www.facebook.com/help>

**Instagram Help Page**

<https://www.facebook.com/help/instagram/192435014247952>

**YouTube Help Page**

<https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/2802027>



**WhatsApp Help Page**

<https://faq.whatsapp.com/?lang=en>

**Twitter Help Page**

<https://help.twitter.com/en>

**Report hate speech on TikTok**

<https://support.tiktok.com/en/safety-hc/report-a-problem>

## ► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

- Which social media platforms do you use?
- Do you usually report posts or accounts when you see them posting something that goes against guidelines? Why or why not?
- How often do you see hate speech messages on social media? How does that make you feel?

## Additional Materials

Additional information on dangerous speech can be found at:

<https://dangerousspeech.org/what-is-ds/>

An article on how being a part of a group can lead to prosocial action:

<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2022/01/tribalism-myth-group-solidarity-prejudice-conflict/621008/>

2

# Social Media Use and Fact - Checking

# Contents

## Interacting Online Mis-, Dis-, and Mal-Information

- Information Verification Tools
- Spotting Mis- and Disinformation
- Verifying Images
- Africa Fact-Checking Fellowship #AFFCameroon

## Online Conduct

- Social Media Code of Conduct
- ThinkB4UClick
- Engaging with Hateful Messages
- Additional Resources



*Africa Fact-Checking Fellowship fellows in session.  
Photo by Derick Kinang*

# Interacting Online

In the last chapter, we talked about hate speech and its harmful effects.

The next question is: **how do we work towards countering hate speech and spreading messages of peace and reconciliation?** That's what this chapter will focus on.

We will discuss what misinformation and disinformation are and how to spot them. And we will talk about guidelines on how to engage with the online world in a positive, peaceful manner.

**We all hold the power to stand against hate and be responsible stewards of our online life. Let's learn how to do this well.**

## Mis-, Dis-, and Mal-Information

Online, it is very easy to share and repost other people's content. That ease of posting can be a good thing, but it also has negative consequences: a lot of false information is posted and shared.

But not all false information is posted with the same aim. There are different levels of falsehoods, called misinformation, disinformation, and mal-information. What is the difference? In essence, the difference is the intent behind why the wrong information is being shared.

**Misinformation** is when you share incorrect information, but you do not know that it is wrong. This means that the person posting misinformation is not intending to cause harm. They are simply ill-informed. But even if misinformation is not done with bad intent, it still causes harm. The good thing is because misinformation is based on people having wrong facts, it can easily be countered and corrected.

**An example:** You share information about electricity prices doubling soon because you heard this from a close friend. You failed to verify this information and it is not true.

**Disinformation** is when you purposefully share incorrect information in order to deceive people. This means that the person posting disinformation is intending to mislead, deceive, and cause harm. Disinformation cannot be fixed by simply presenting facts, because the person

already knows it is wrong. A lot of disinformation is often made up of a mix of truth and lies, where lies are mixed in with truths. This is done so that the person reading the disinformation feels that since some of the information is familiar or true, the rest must be as well. Beware of this trap.

**An example:** You see a post that a politician supports closing a local school, which is a lie. The person sharing this knows that this is not true but wants you to vote against the politician and so is spreading disinformation to influence your vote.

**Mal-information** is information that might be true or not but is shared solely with the aim to inflict harm, either towards an individual or a larger group.

**An example:** Someone shares a photo of a dead child and posts saying that members of another tribe killed the child. The photo might be real, but it could be from a different country and it is shared solely to incite anger against the other tribe.



**Why is it important to spot mis-, dis- and mal-information? Because even small falsehoods hold the power to hurt people and lead to conflict. The more we learn to demand the truth, the safer our world becomes.**

The problem is that we are not trained to spot mis- and disinformation easily. This is a skill we need to learn how to do. We will cover this in the next section.

## ► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

- Can you, in your own words, describe the difference between misinformation and disinformation?
- Can you give an example of how false information can cause harm to you or your community?
- Who benefits from false content?

## Information Verification Tools

One of the objectives of the #defyhatenow initiative is to only spread truths online. But in a world where it is so easy to share and repost content, **how do we know if what we see is true?**

The answer is that it takes effort and rethinking how we interact with the world. We have to question everything we see online, even if the information comes from people we know and trust.

Keep in mind that misinformation is wrong information spread by accident – the person doesn't know it is false information. So that means that even when we hear something from someone close to us, we have to use these same tools that start with the motto **Question Everything**.

## Spotting Mis- and Disinformation

Below are a few steps that you can take to try to spot mis- and disinformation when you see something posted as fact online.

**Research the source:** Who's sharing this information? If it's online, does the website sound familiar? Does it have political affiliations? If it's a person sharing, is this individual a frequent exaggerator? Do they have a job, education, or experience that would give them insider info? Do they seem trustworthy? What do you know about them?

**Question the motivation:** If you had to guess, why do

you think this person is sharing this content? What is their motivation? Is the story balanced and fair? Who gains from you reading the post and acting on it?

**Check the date:** It is easy to get angry about an article online that someone shares, only to realize it was published years ago and no longer applies. Along with the date, check the location and other facts to see if it is actually relevant to your situation.

**Cross-check:** If someone is sharing "news", check if other reliable news sources are reporting the same information. If not, it's unlikely to be true. Also, keep in mind that there are more and less reliable sources. When it comes to news, websites such as Al Jazeera, AllAfrica, and The BBC are very trustworthy. If you are looking for facts, a good site is Wikipedia. Wikipedia is a website that collects information on many topics and is peer-reviewed, meaning that many people work on the information and have all agreed that it is correct.

**Read past the headline:** People create headlines that sound more intense and scandalous than the story really is. Read past the headline and see what the entire article says. When reading, see if the article is listing its sources. And if they are, verify that those sources are accurate. If there is a story and no information on the source, there is a good chance the story is not true.

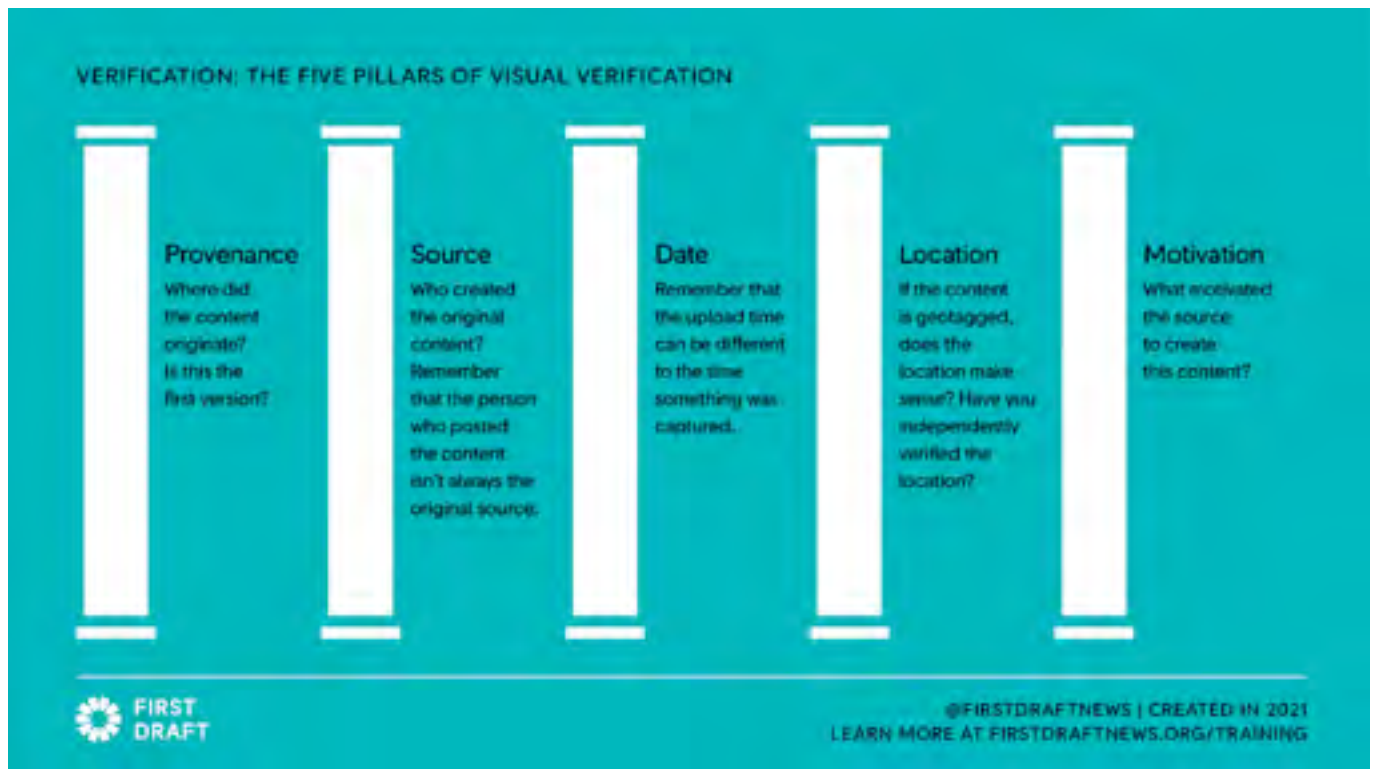
**Question emotionally charged content:** Does the post contain emotionally manipulative language designed to get you upset or excited? That's a red flag. Reliable sources let the facts fuel your response, not emotional language.

**Distrust absolute narratives:** If you come across a post or story claiming something is only good or bad, be careful. If the content sounds too good to be true, it probably is. If the content sounds only bad, it probably is not accurate either. Look for a balanced representation of reality.

## ► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

- When you see a post online, is your first reaction to question whether it is true?
- Which of the tools above feels easiest to apply? Which requires the most work?
- What are some red flags that tell you a story might be fake?
- How could you encourage others to verify content more closely?
- Could you teach your family members and friends about what you have learned and the steps they could take to fact-check information?





## Verifying Images

Now that we have learned about how to spot falsehoods in the content of posts, let's also talk about how to verify images.

Images are difficult to deal with, because visuals can be manipulated and changed using computer programs, so what you see in a photo may or may not be real. Additionally, mis- and disinformation is spread by sharing photos out of context, for example by posting a photo from a war scene, but it shows a war from a different country or time period.

Below we offer some ideas of how to verify whether images you are seeing are fitting and truthful or whether they are likely trying to trick you. Regardless of whether you are looking at a photo from a close friend or a stranger, the questions to ask are the same. These questions are similar to the questions we discussed above regarding content and have the same motto of **Question Everything**.

**Provenance:** Are you looking at the original photo, taken by the person posting? Or has it been reposted many times and the original photographer is no longer known?

**Source:** Who is posting the photo now? How did they get the photo?

**Date:** When was the photo taken? Do you have any way of knowing this based only on the photo?

**Location:** Where was the photo taken? Look at it closely and see if it looks like the location it is pretending to be.

**For example:** Do the streets and houses look like they should? What side of the street are cars driving on? What do the trees and plants look like? How are the people dressed? Look for clues to see if it fits what it says it shows.

**Motivation:** Why is the person posting this photo? What is their motivation? Take a guess about how they are trying to make you feel and what reaction they are trying to get out of you by posting this photo.

Here is a more detailed question guide that can help you assess the risk that you are being misled by an image. It moves from danger (the word NO and red color) to trustworthy (the word YES and blue color).

Another way to verify images is to use Google Chrome **image search**. Just as you can use Google to check for facts and names, you can also use it to see whether an image has been previously published online. How? Right-click on any image, hit "search google for image," and see if a picture has appeared online before.

## VISUAL VERIFICATION GUIDE: PHOTOS

	NO				YES
<b>1. ARE YOU LOOKING AT THE ORIGINAL VERSION?</b>	A reverse image search returns identical photos indexed online before the event in question took place	A reverse image search returns similar results with some identical features, suggesting it might be a composite	A date search on each social network reveals it to be the first of many versions shared online but we have not yet received confirmation from the uploader	We are unable to find other versions online and basic shadow and reflection checks suggest that it has not been manipulated	It was sent to us directly and we have spoken to the source
<b>2. DO YOU KNOW WHO CAPTURED THE PHOTO?</b>	It came in via an anonymous email or chat app number	It was uploaded to a social network but the username does not appear elsewhere online. The uploader wants to remain anonymous	By running full name searches, reverse searching the user's profile photo, and/or researching the domain ownership of their blog or website, we were able to identify the uploader	We communicated with the uploader via social media to confirm that they took the photo	We questioned the source and their answers correlated with EXIF data, weather reports and their own online footprint
<b>3. DO YOU KNOW WHERE THE PHOTO WAS CAPTURED?</b>	There was no location data available and it contains no visual clues to investigate	We have cross-referenced with other photos coming from the scene but there is no satellite or street view imagery available to confirm the location	We have used visual clues such as signage, architecture and clothing to establish a broad geographical region	We have crossreferenced landscape and landmarks using mapping tools and have confirmed the lat/long coordinates	The source was able to confirm other landmarks in their field of vision, which matched those shown on online maps
<b>4. DO YOU KNOW WHEN THE PHOTO WAS CAPTURED?</b>	It was sent to us anonymously and there is no EXIF data available	We checked the timestamp on the social network to see when it was first shared online but we have no EXIF data confirming when it was taken	The social time stamp shows it was uploaded shortly after the event occurred and it features visual evidence that correlates with other eyewitness reports	We confirmed that the weather conditions and any shadows visible in the image correlate with the time, date and location given by the source	It contains EXIF data that, combined with other checks, confirms when it was taken
<b>5. DO YOU KNOW WHY THE PHOTO WAS CAPTURED?</b>	We do not know who took the photo so we can't ascertain what their motivations might have been	The social media account was created very recently and/or social searches reveal the uploader rarely posts online so there is little evidence to confirm their movements or motivations	Wider online searches of the uploader's real name reveals that they are connected with an activist or advocacy organisation but there is no additional information to know their motivation in this case	Searches of the uploader's social media activity leading up to the event confirm their reasons for capturing the photo, i.e. holiday-maker, journalist, works locally	The photographer confirmed the circumstances surrounding the photo

## ► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

- When you see a photo posted online, is your first reaction to wonder whether it is real or manipulated?
- Which pillar of verification discussed makes the most sense to you? Which seems complicated?
- What are some red flags that tell you a photo might be fake or taken out of context?

## Africa fact-checking fellowship #AFFCameroon

The Africa fact-checking fellowship (#AFFCameroon) is an initiative by #defyhatenow, in partnership with Data Cameroon, to promote fact-checking, data journalism, and digital rights among journalists, bloggers, and online content creators. The quarterly

program aims to provide fellows with the skill sets and tools needed to tackle the current mis-, dis-, and mal-information challenges in the countries they live and work in.

#AFFCameroon uses a blended learning model that utilizes webinars, practical lessons, peer learning, and hands-on field assignments. The fellows who have participated in the training program often include online content creators, media journalists, and communication experts.

#AFFCameroon also offers fact-checking workshops, during which you can sharpen your fact-checking skills. More information can be found online.

Learning how to spot mis- and disinformation online helps you be a responsible social media user, because it prevents you from engaging with or sharing false content or images.

# Online Conduct

The next step is only creating content that fosters peace and is accurate and fair. Keep in mind that anything you write, link to, and mention online is public and can be shared with anyone. Distinctions are generally not made between your 'private' and 'professional' opinions. Statements, tagging, or actions like 'liking' comments on Facebook will be interpreted as an indication of your personal opinions. That is why it is so important to **#thinkb4uclick**.

Below is a code of conduct that offers guidelines on how to engage responsibly with social media, both personally and professionally.

## Social Media Code of Conduct

### BE TRANSPARENT

When you post, you should identify whether you are posting on your behalf or on behalf of an organization. The person seeing your post should know why you are posting the content you are sharing.

### BE CLEAR

Post clear messages and take responsibility for the content you post, both when people react positively and less positively.

### CHECK YOUR FACTS

Before posting, always make sure your facts are correct. If you are reposting information from others, verify your sources. If you can't be 100% positive that what you are sharing is accurate, do not post it.

### BE FAIR AND RESPECTFUL

Never post malicious, misleading, or unfair content. Do not post content that is obscene, defamatory, threatening, or discriminatory. Do not post comments that you would not say directly to another person. Always consider how other people might react before you post.

### BE POLITE

Stay polite in tone and respectful of people's opinions, especially when discussions become heated. Show proper consideration for other people's privacy.

### AMPLIFY THE POSITIVE

Encourage the good and help build connectedness, engagement, and community.

### GIVE CREDIT

If you post something that originally came from someone else (like a quote, an image, or an idea), say so in your post.

## ► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

- Can you agree to follow these guidelines? Do you already?
- Which guidelines are harder for you to follow? What makes them harder?
- Do you feel most people in your life post more positive or negative content?
- How could you encourage others to follow these guidelines?

## #Thinkb4uClick

**#defyhatenow** launched the **#ThinkB4UClick** campaign to encourage people to be responsible social media users, to learn to verify information before they share misinformation, and to support peace. You too can join this movement! Become a peace ambassador by agreeing to follow the guidelines below.

As a Peace Ambassador on social media, I will:

- think before I click
- always verify information before sharing or reposting anything
- analyze posts I write to ensure that what I am saying is accurate and positive
- be responsible for my actions

## Engaging with Hateful Messages

There is disagreement about whether it makes sense to respond to hateful messages online. Most often, the better option is just to amplify the positive and use your voice to foster peace. But if you do feel the need to respond, here are some guidelines offered by the Media Diversity Training Institute on how to respond to hate speech.

### DON'T BE ABUSIVE

Make sure your words and any content you share do not spread bigotry, prejudice, or hate.



**DON'T SPREAD THEIR HATE**

Giving attention to fringe individuals and their hatred can be counterproductive. You might give them the attention and publicity that they crave.

**DON'T RESPOND TO OLD POSTS**

Responding to old posts risks reviving a conversation and having the adverse effect of spreading hate speech to others who might not have seen it before.

**THINK ABOUT YOUR OBJECTIVES**

Why are you wanting to engage with the person expressing hateful speech? Are you seeking to lessen the consequences of a hateful post on a wider audience? Are you seeking to express support for a group or identity under attack? Thinking about your goals will help shape your response and the language you use.

**TRY TO ENLIST INFLUENTIAL SUPPORTERS**

Add their usernames to posts. Celebrities, politicians, civic leaders, and subject experts can help bring attention or add weight to your counter-narrative.

**DON'T FEED THE TROLLS**

Some people are open to discussion. But most people posting hate messages are not seeking engagement; they just want to incite anger. These sorts of people are called trolls. Don't interact with them, because they are motivated by engagement.

**BUILD A KNOWLEDGE BANK**

Develop a resource bank of counter-arguments, statistics, information, sources, and links to support your counter-narrative. Subject knowledge is important and those engaging in hateful speech may be armed with many misleading sources of information that they will use. Counter them with credible evidence from an independent and reputable source.

## Additional Resources

**First Draft** is a trusted source and has many resources and videos that go into more detail on how to verify online information.

<https://firstdraftnews.org/long-form-article/verifying-online-information/>

They also offer resources, instructional videos, and training videos on other related topics. <https://firstdraftnews.org/long-form-article/first-drafts-essential-guide-to/>

To fact check information found online, doing a **Google search** is a good idea.

[www.google.com](http://www.google.com)

**AfricaCheck** is also a site that will help you sort facts from fiction.

[www.AfricaCheck.org](http://www.AfricaCheck.org)

**The League of Women Voters** in the USA offers a guide on mis- and disinformation.

<https://www.lwv.org/blog/your-guide-mis-and-disinformation>.

**Safe Sisters** offers tips and tools to safely interact with the digital world, including teaching you how to create stronger passwords.

<https://safesisters.net/>

3

# Peacebuilding through Art and Technology

# Contents

## Peace through Art

- Starting Small

## Artivism

- #defyhatenow and #artivism
- Illustrations for Peace
- Video Games for Peace
- Other #artivism Resources

## #peacejam

## Peace through Technology

- #tech4peace
- #ASKnet
- Makerspaces
- The Mungo
- Other #peacetech Resources



*Lead #ASKotec trainers from #defyhatenow  
South Sudan, Richard Maliamungu and Bior Ajang,  
preparing for a workshop.  
Photo by Laure Nganlay*

# Peace through Art

In this chapter we will look at how art and technology can contribute to peacebuilding. We will also look at examples of how people are using art and technology to spread peace in their communities.

Throughout this chapter, the question we want to be asking ourselves is: **how can we use our art or tech skills to spread peace?**

Sometimes, when we hear the word art or artist, we think about someone else, perhaps someone who makes a living from art or someone who is famous. But that isn't what we are talking about in this chapter.

For us, everyone is an artist. We are all born with the desire to create and be creative. And anytime you use this creativity, especially to create something meaningful, that is art.

Cooking a beautiful meal is art.  
Sewing is art, even if it is only to sew something lovely for you or your family.  
Dance is art, even if it is only dancing with neighbors.  
Writing a story is art.  
Singing is art.  
A child drawing a picture is art.

In short, even if we don't think of ourselves as artists, we are.

And so the question becomes:  
How can we use our art to support and bring about peace?  
How can we use art to contribute to the good of society?

## ► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

- When you think of art, what do you think of most? Paintings? Music? Knitting? Dance?
- How can art contribute to peace?
- What is it about art that makes it easier to get the message across than with written text alone?
- Can you think of good examples of where art brought people together in harmony?
- Is all art peaceful?

## Starting Small

Below we are going to give examples of how art can be used in big ways to foster peace. But it is important to stress that smaller expressions of art can have a real and important impact as well.

So perhaps you draw pictures of peace and hope and hang them in a school or other building for people to see. Or you hang them outside your home. This fosters peace.

Perhaps you sew or knit something for someone in need. This fosters peace.

Perhaps you work together with others to cook meals for newly arriving displaced people. This fosters peace.

Perhaps you teach children how to dance in order to express their emotions. This fosters peace.

Perhaps you draw to work through your negative emotions instead of expressing them publicly on social media. This fosters peace.

Perhaps you act as a storyteller, spreading stories of hope and love. This fosters peace.

Start small. It all adds up.

## ► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

- Think about your daily life: What small steps could you take to use your art to spread peace?

# ▶ Artivism

The term Artivism came about in the late 1990s and was first used by artists in East Los Angeles, USA (the Chicano/Mexican part of town) and artists from Mexico. Both groups were being oppressed and faced discrimination and wanted to create art that empowered others. They came up with the term artivism. It combines the terms **art** and **activism**.

What does it mean? Artivism is the use of art to make a political or social statement and to raise awareness of issues of inequality. Artivism includes both traditional forms of art, such as painting and dance, as well as things like Street Art and Spoken Word.

Artivism reinforces the idea that we are all artists and can all contribute to a cause such as peacebuilding through art of any kind. We do not need to be professional artists to create art and be part of the artivism movement.

The hashtag **#artivism** is used on social media platforms to bring attention to artivism in local communities.

## #defyhatenow and #artivism

Below are three examples of how **#defyhatenow** has supported larger-scale #artivism projects that aim to use music and film to spread messages of peace online.

**One Africa - spoken word against hate speech**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KeYmSZUCqLU>



One example of **#artivism** at work is this music video created by the **#PeaceVillage**. Their goal is to use music to send positive, educational messages to people and to discourage hate speech online and offline. This **#Peace4ALL** video was designed to break down the prejudices in South Sudanese communities and foster a culture of reconciliation. It was recorded in the Rhino camp refugee settlement in Uganda.

**#ThinkB4UClick spoken word**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MVYDjzT9i00>



**#ThinkB4UClick** (Think Before You Click) is an awareness campaign that points out the dangers of misinformation, fake news, and hate speech. It stresses the importance of thinking about what we share and like on social media.

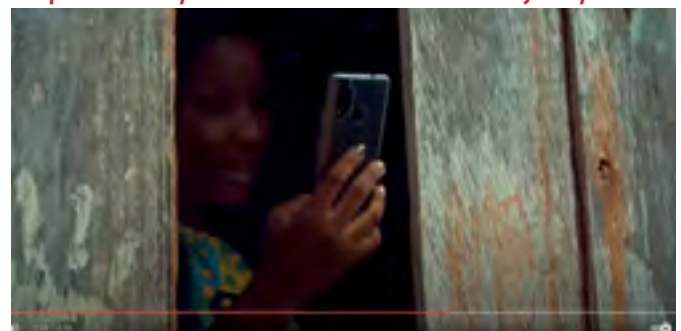
Mac Alunge wrote and performed this Spoken Word. The goal was to spread the message of needing to **#ThinkB4UClick** in order to reduce online and offline hate speech and possible incitement to violence in Cameroon.

**DEFY! - a #defyhatenow film**  
<https://youtu.be/9zdgsc2jr08>



The **#defyhatenow** film DEFY! tells the fictional story of a senior politician in South Sudan and his newly found passion for social media and the risks that come with using these platforms to spread propaganda and rumors.

**DEFY the Act**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rzuvjRMyHGU>



Johnson Ebigwe created this short film to educate Cameroonians about the dangers of mis-, dis-, and malinformation and how spreading lies can incite violence in communities.



## ► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

- Do you like to sing? Is there a song you could write and record that would spread a positive message?
- If you don't sing but can write, could you write the words to a song?
- What would you write about? What do you think would help others?
- If you made a film, what story would it tell?

## Illustrations for Peace

Felix Fokoua is a self-taught artist from Yaounde, Cameroon. He won the best Young African Designer Award in 2017 and the MasterCard Foundation Young African Artists Award in 2018. He has created illustrations to foster communication and messages of peace on social media.

Here are some of the illustrations he has done:



**Impact of War Conflict** shows the impact that war has on people and their children. It is meant to make us think about what legacy we are creating for the next generation.



**Stand Against War** depicts a woman standing under the protection of the unification symbol, praying for the souls of all of those who lost their lives due to the conflict. The woman's posture shows that we must stand still and stand firm in unity, not letting others divide and destroy Cameroon.



**VivreEnsemble Gathering** shows people coming together around food, thereby showing how communal meals create a sense of togetherness and oneness.

## ► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

- Could you use your drawings or illustrations to foster peace?
- Even if they are much simpler than these, what sort of art or drawings could you share?
- Do you use emojis to communicate positive messages online?



## Video Games for Peace

A talk with Olivier Madiba of Kiro'o Games, who built the Aurion games series.  
By Kendi Gikunda

### How has Kiro'o Games helped reshape the minds of young people?

In the Aurion games you gain strength from building yourself up, (by believing in yourself and your skill set), and your purpose in life.

In the Aurion games you gain strength from building yourself up, [by believing in yourself and your skill set], and your purpose in life.

We are also creating a new game, "the public service game," where the player is a leader in Africa and in this case it's a politician. It was inspired by the corrupt practices in Cameroon. In the game, you build social services for your people and that's how you proceed to the next level. We aim to create disgust for corruption. This helps people think about how their behavior and actions impacts them and their society.

### How does Kiro'o Games support peace and solidarity?

[The games] give young people who are idle [something to do instead of] engaging in hate speech online. They would rather play these games than go out wandering, which could lead to misconduct and delinquency.

We have tried to maintain an open dialog, starting at our office. We have Francophone and Anglophone speakers working with us. All our games and comic books are bilingual, including our website.

<http://kiroogames.com/>  
<http://aurionthegame.com/>

## ► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

- Do you play video games or read comics?
- What messages do you get from video games? Are they positive or negative messages?
- How do the games you play either contribute to peace or foster a sense of violence?
- Do you think games are a good way to foster self-esteem and peace in young people? Why or why not?

## Other #artivism Resources

**Beautiful Rising** is an international network of artist-activist-trainers helping grassroots movements become more creative and effective. A Pan-African guidebook is available. <https://beautifultrouble.org/beautiful-rising>

### Featured Artists

We flip artists into activists. Curated by the likes of experts and influencers such as Paula Mendez, Geron, Shepard Fairey, Pavienne Rodriguez, and America Ferrara - over 130 US-based artists from over 8,000 submissions have had their work selected for artistic excellence, relevance and unique perspective. Their works have been strategically distributed through large scale public art campaigns in the digital and analog world to be used as tools to drive civic action and amplify social movements.



### Amplifier

Amplifier is a US-based nonprofit design lab that builds art and media to amplify important social issues. While the content is often US-specific, there are posters that work in all contexts, especially those promoting tolerance and acceptance. Their artwork provides inspiration for how issues in Cameroon could be addressed through art.

<https://amplifier.org/>

## ► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

- Would you like to use art to be part of #artivism?
- What could you do to be part of this movement?

# #peacejam

One of the activities that **#defyhatenow** participates in every year is the social media #peacejam.

What is a **#peacejam**? It is a community-based event where people get together to share their ideas, visions, and hopes for a more peaceful future. It is also a great place to make new friends and connections.

To “jam” is a term used in music. It is used when musicians get together to play, improvise, and just see what happens - without any idea ahead of time how the music will turn out. When you jam, you just let the energy and ideas bounce and add your ideas to the mix to see what happens. Jamming together is a way to create something new without a lot of planning. It lets ideas flow freely.

This is what the **#peacejam** aims to do as well in the context of peace. It is a space to let the energy and ideas flow in order to see what can be created through this free exchange. It is a space to experiment.

The **#peacejam** sessions can range from very loose gatherings of ordinary people to sessions that have hosts who bring together performers and activists. Regardless of how formal or informal, the sessions are a place to share ideas about how to engage in peacebuilding activities, especially in the context of social media, without needing to have a fully formed plan before you start contributing.

The main idea: Start where you are at, bounce ideas off others, share, and see what comes of it.

## Start a #peacejam

Anyone can start a social media **#peacejam** by organizing an event or simply by sharing messages of peace online and adding your voice to the others also advocating for peace. Messages of peace can be posted every day of the year, but there are also holidays that work well to highlight the need for peace. Examples are the UN World Peace Day on September 21st, World Press Freedom Day on May 3rd, and International Women’s Day on March 8th.

Hashtags to use are **#peacejam**, **#Acts4Peace237**, and **#defyhatenow**. This helps link your message to the wider messages of peace being spread online.

Here is an example from **#defyhatenow**

**#peacejam2021**. It is by Joyce Diko Duku, a feminist activist, spoken word poet, and an athlete. She uses poetry and spoken work to highlight injustices and uphold humanity. This is the Spoken Word she performed:

## GOODBYE HUMANITY

You’ve always been the light  
Now it’s very dark  
Goodbye humanity!

I miss you  
I constantly find myself walking around  
Hoping that maybe you will come around  
The void in my soul is killing me slowly  
I search the crowd for your face

How do I find you?  
How do I find you when everyone wants to be Zol  
kebir at the expense of meskin  
Here!  
Where we value some paper they call money over life  
So no surprise toronto have no mercy on the little I  
have  
And yaba can’t control his lust  
Or is it the girls crazy over yaba?  
It’s the V8, it’s the flashy lifestyle  
When hotels are mushrooming, kristal is flowering  
the city monopolizing the Nile

How do I find you?  
How do I find you when I live in a who do I know  
society?  
When I’m struggling for nothing?  
How do I find you?  
How do I find you when my bank statement decrees  
the respect I deserve?  
So I have two faces three faces  
Many faces to be fit in this survival war

Empty brains on the frontline  
Manipulated by the cruel evil minded who are building  
empires founded on innocent blood  
War onto you full brain to think you can pop up only  
to be chopped off and used as an example, Lesson,  
threat that courage and lifespan is inverse  
And to the full brain coward, silence is deadliest  
Evil minded weapons can’t compare  
So who’s left  
When courage falls  
Is it monuments parading streets named after  
courage?



Is it courage's blood face hanging on the wall?  
Is it courage's death marked on your calendar?  
Or is it courage's blood sacrificed as ink to write  
history for you?  
Who's left  
When courage falls!

Am on a path  
You on it too  
We are paying for crimes which have made this path  
unending  
To a destination, who knows  
But i'm hopeful it's like in my dreams  
Peaceful, am honored for me and I honor you for you  
Life is precious  
Every form of it  
From me, you to even that plant species getting to  
exist  
It's just but a dream  
I'm awake!

I miss you  
I constantly find myself walking around  
Hoping that maybe you'll come around  
The void in my soul is killing me slowly  
I search the crowd for your face

How do I find you?  
Humanity!  
I cannot save your face  
You cannot save her face  
Her face can only be saved by we together  
We put aside our differences and make known the  
impossible to possible  
For division cannot be the mission  
But to feel proud  
When she has to face the mirror, like the beautiful  
coloring of the mural  
Painting every heart, our hearts, with love  
For it is us to complete the journey of our resting  
heroines and heroes  
Us to uphold our responsibility to the unborn  
generation  
We shall unite  
And together  
Restore her once upon a time beauty and honor  
Peace will reign

Humanity  
You taught me to love me for who I am  
And to love her, him and it as me

Goodbye! © TATA

# Peace through Technology

## #tech4peace

While technology can be used as a tool to ignite conflicts, it can also be used to spread peace. **#peacetech** and **#tech4peace** are two hashtags often used to spread ideas of how technology can help in the peacebuilding process.

Technology itself is neither good nor bad. Rather, it is people's decisions on how to use technology that either fuels conflicts or creates opportunities for peace.

When we hear the word technology or **#tech4peace**, we might think of more complicated technology, like coding. But really any use of technology that supports peace is included under this term.

So if you use social media to follow and support peace efforts, that is **#tech4peace**.

If you build online communities that work to fight injustice, that is **#tech4peace**.

If you blog, podcast, or create videos online that promote peace, that is **#tech4peace**.

If you create or support an app that helps people find resources or distributes food, that is **#tech4peace**.

So for this part of the chapter, we are using technology in the broadest sense of the world, meaning anything that involves the use of any technology. And in that sense, since most of us use smartphones or computers, we are all already using technology. The question is: will we use technology to promote peace?

## ► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

- Which technologies do you already use? A phone? A smartphone? A computer? Something else?
- How tech-savvy are you?
- Would you be interested in learning more about technology, like coding or programming?
- How do you think technology can be used by non tech-savvy people to foster community-building and conflict mitigation?

## #ASKnet - Access to Skills and Knowledge Network

**#ASKnet** is a program by the r0g\_agency that links together five community-based, youth-led innovation hubs in South Sudan and Uganda.

The goal of **#ASKnet** is to build a sustainable network of trainers who can then empower others in their communities with the tools and knowledge needed to address specific challenges, support community development, and ease inequality. It does so through workshops that teach people about open source hardware and software, entrepreneurship, media production, gender equality awareness, trauma healing, and financial literacy.

By teaching skills ranging from how to repair a radio to how to code, **#ASKnet** helps empower individuals so that they can go out and help others, spreading help and peace through their communities.

<https://openculture.agency/asknet-access-to-skills-and-knowledge-network/>

### ► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

- Have you ever helped someone repair something? Tell us about it.
- Do you have a tech skill you could share with others? What is it?
- Does your community have repair cafés? Is this something you would like to get involved in?
- How could helping others with repairs and learning about technology help bring about peace?

## Makerspaces

What is a makerspace? It is any space, large or small, that is open to the community and where people can come to meet and collaborate on tech-related projects in a creative, playful atmosphere.

The maker-movement is part of the DIY (Do-It-Yourself) trend that encourages people to take a more hands-on approach to everything, learning to do things for themselves instead of relying on professionals to do it for them. While the DIY world often is used in terms of home, car, and bike repairs, makerspaces often have the added element of technology involved.

At its core, the DIY and maker-movement empower people and help build a more equal society, in which

tools are available and skills are able to be learned and taught to others.

One example of a makerspace is the MboaLab in Yaoundé, Cameroon. MboaLab is a makerspace dedicated to promoting peace through social innovation, community-based education, collaboration, and mediation. MboaLab's aim is to foster sustainable local innovation in science and health in order to improve the community's standard of living.

<https://www.mboalab.africa/about/>

### ► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

- Have you ever been to a makerspace?
- Could you imagine creating one in your community? What would you need to start one?
- What are the benefits of spaces such as makerspaces and the DIY movement?
- Have you ever done a DIY project? Have you taught others how to DIY something?
- How can makerspaces and DIY contribute to peace?

## The Mungo

Monitoring online social media activity, correctly interpreting potential imminent acts of mass violence, and summoning a response can save lives. The MUNGO is an Early Warning Early Response (EWER) system developed by #defyhatenow that plots, reports, and highlights violent incidents, patterns, and hotspots in Cameroon's conflict regions. Named after the river connecting Cameroon's anglophone and francophone regions, the MUNGO aims to foster peace through data analysis.

<https://www.themungo.net/>

## Other #peacetech Resources

### Peace Direct

Peace Direct is a nonprofit that works to support peace through technology. They also support Platform4Dialog, where people can get together online to discuss approaches to peace.

<https://www.peacedirect.org>

<https://www.peacedirect.org/platform4dialogue/>

### PeaceTech Lab

PeaceTech Lab is a US-based nonprofit that works to reduce violent conflict using technology, media, and data. The website offers some resources to download or contribute to collecting data.

<http://www.peacetechnology.org>







# Identity

# Contents

## Identity

- Social Identity Wheel
- Identity Construction
- Sex- and Gender-Based Identity

## Cycle of Socialization

- Prejudice Awareness
- The Role of Meaningful Inter-Group Dialog
- The Role of Community Leaders
- Mistaken Identities Podcast



*Secondary school students playing the #defyhatenow game. Photo by Tebah Haggai*



# Identity

As children, we quickly learn to think of people as belonging to certain groups. This means that we learn who is part of our group and who is an outsider.

There are the people who are part of our family-group - and there are those who are not part of it.

There are the children we play with - and there are the children we do not play with.

There are people from our village - and there are those from other villages.

There are people who are part of our religion - and there are those of a different religion.

There are people we think are smart - and people we think are not smart.

The list goes on.

We are constantly creating these groups in our heads: us - and them. Us - and other people.

Religions, nationalities, tribes, and languages all work to create and reinforce this way of seeing the world. This way of thinking comes easily. But thinking in terms of group identity is also a source of tension and fighting between people. Why? Because it is easier to treat people badly, if we think they are very different and not like us or our group.

But there is good news. The more we reflect on identity, the more we can see that these categories are created by us. That means that we don't have to accept this way of thinking. We can instead focus on what we have in common.

**The more we can see our similarities and our shared humanity, the more we can live together peacefully.**

So that is the goal of this chapter: to reflect on identity, how it is formed and shaped, and how we can begin to think about it differently in order to promote peace.

## ► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

Let us think about the labels we give ourselves and others.

- How do we most often identify ourselves? Is it based on where we live? The family we belong to? Our age? Gender? Tribe? Marital status?

Religion? Political views? The work we do?

- What groups do we belong to? What groups do we not belong to?
- Did we grow up hearing people talk negatively about other groups? How were other groups talked about?
- What are the benefits of identifying with a certain group? What are the dangers of doing so?
- Think about a group you belong to that is important to you.
  - Share a story about a time when it felt good to be a member of this group.
  - Share a story about a time when it was challenging or difficult to be a member of this group.

## Social Identity Wheel

The Social Identity Wheel is an activity that helps us see how identity is made up of many parts.

By thinking about identity not as one thing, but made up of many things, we can more easily find similarities with others, including those people we often think of as not belonging to our group.

Let's look at the diagram below.

The diagram has a circle that is separated into different sections, each representing one potential aspect of our identity. There are of course many only things that make our identities, but these are some of the **common elements**.



## Learning to think about identity as made up of many things helps foster peace in our communities.

How? Imagine that we meet someone of a different religion. What happens? Our natural instinct is to think that we have nothing in common with that person. We exclude them from our group.

But if we think about this chart, we can notice that we share other aspects of identity.

Perhaps we are both married or the same age. By noticing what we have in common, we can use that as a way to connect with the other person. And the more we can connect, the more we break down barriers in our minds between us and them. We might even then one day be able to start exploring the areas that feel different, like religion, and realize that many of the values associated with religion are shared as well.

This furthers the connection and helps build a more peaceful co-existence with others.

The more we feel connected, the more we will be kind towards those we feel connected to. If we feel connected, we will not do harm or speak badly of them.

## ► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

Looking at the social identity chart, reflect on these questions:

- Which elements matter a lot to your identity?
- Which elements don't matter to you?
- Which elements do you first notice about others?
- Which elements do you rarely think about or notice?
- Which elements have the greatest effect on how you perceive others?

### Here is an exercise:

Think about someone you know who is not part of your group.

Then, with this person in mind, go through the elements in the chart and try to see if there are actually some areas where you have something in common. Which ones do you share?

### Here is a group exercise:

Divide participants into groups of 3-5 people and have them pick the five elements that matter most to their identity. Have them also pick their most important identity.

Then together in the larger group, call out identity categories and have everyone who strongly identifies with that category stand up.

After you have called out several categories, you can end the exercise by asking:

- How did it feel to stand when you were a part of a larger group?
- How did it feel to stand when you were alone or almost alone?
- Can you think of situations at school or in our communities when participants might feel that they have to stand up alone?
- What could you do to help someone in that situation feel that they are not alone?

*(The Social Identity Wheel was adapted from the Inclusive Teaching Initiative at the University of Michigan: <http://sites.lsa.umich.edu/inclusive-teaching/>)*

## Identity Construction

Our identity feels so normal to us that we often don't think about the fact that it is created and reinforced by the family and society we live in. Identities also change with time and circumstance.

If we are unmarried, for example, our identity is different than when we are married. When we are young we have a different identity than when we are old. Our identity before our education is different than when we are done with school.

**Our identity changes everyday, in small and big ways.**

## ► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

- How has your identity changed in the last few years? What caused this shift in identity?

## Sex- and Gender-Based Identity

One of the most common ways in which we distinguish human beings is by **biological sex, based on our physical bodies and reproductive organs**. So when a baby is born and we look and call out "It's a girl!" or "It's a boy!" - this is biological sex based on the baby's body.

But when we start talking differently to the new baby, using softer tones with girls, or expecting boys to be tougher, or when telling boys it is not okay to cry, we are no longer talking about biological sex. We are talking about **gender**.

**Gender is the set of behaviors, expectations, roles, and rules we have about what men and women (and boys and girls) should and should not do.**

Gender is something humans create and it changes over time and between cultures. Our ideas of gender are not the same today as they were 10 years ago, or 100 years ago, or a 1000 years ago. They change.

Gender roles also differ between countries.

Ideas about gender dictate which economic, social, political, and cultural opportunities people will have. People pretend that these things are based on biological sex, but in reality it is based on the rules and norms people make up.

That is the important message here: **Gender roles have nothing to do with biological sex. But they like to hide and claim they are based on biological sex. And we are so used to thinking about them as the same thing, so we often have a hard time seeing which is biology and which is culture.**

Biological sex = based on bodies and biology  
Gender = based on culture and traditions

Saying that men are often taller than women is a statement about biological sex.  
But saying that men are emotionally tougher than women is about gender.

Saying that women give birth is about biological sex.  
Saying that women are more gentle and nurturing is about gender.

Saying that men are more logical and should make the decisions? That's gender.  
Saying that women are best suited for taking care of home and family? That's gender.  
Saying that boys are more aggressive than girls? That's gender.  
Saying some tasks are women's work, like cleaning? That's gender.  
Saying some tasks are men's work, like being a leader or a pastor? That's gender.

Understanding gender doesn't mean we pretend there are no differences between men and women. Differences exist. Our bodies are different.

But is there anything that makes a woman physically better at cooking? No. It is just something learned and reinforced.  
Is there any reason a man can't be emotional and gentle? No. These are all just learned behaviors.

**The more we understand that all people are different and have different strengths, the more we can create healthy societies in which everyone is given the opportunity to thrive.**

So as part of identity, let us pay attention to how often we think or say that something (an emotion, an action) is only what men do, or women do. Let us ask ourselves instead:  
Is this possibly a learned behavior? Can I see it differently?

## ► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

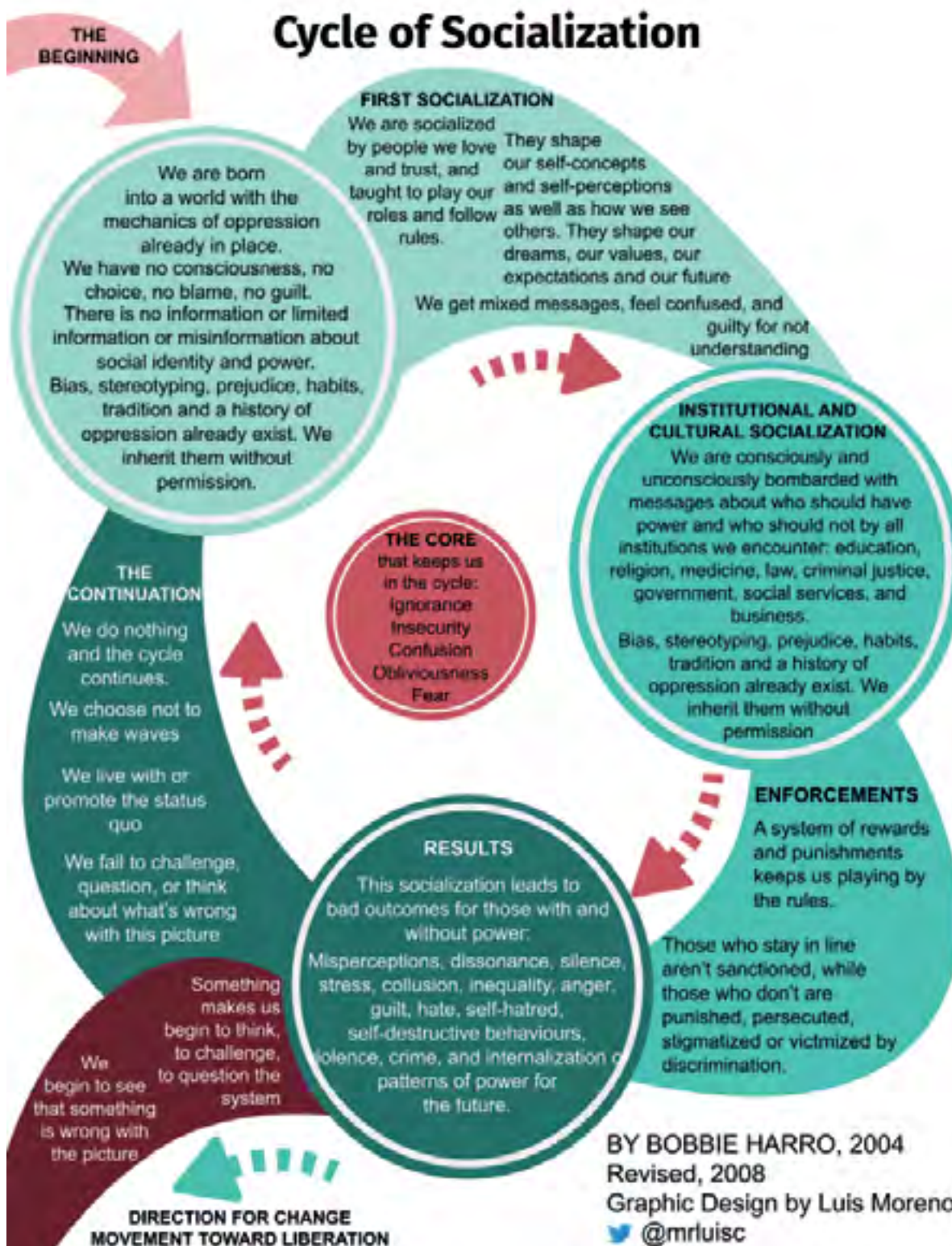
- Try to explain the difference between biological sex and gender in your own words. Are there any aspects you have a hard time explaining or understanding?
- What are the messages you received about gender when you were growing up? How were women supposed to be and act like? What were men supposed to be and act like?
- How were you taught (by watching others or being told directly) that people of your gender deal with strong feelings, such as affection and anger?
- How do we often treat people who do not act "properly," according to gender roles?
- Are there tasks around the home or work that you have been told that women or men are better at? Who benefits from this? Who does not benefit?
- Is there anything you would like to do in life, but have been told you can't because of your gender?
- Societies, in which traditional gender roles have been replaced with a more open thinking about gender, tend to be very peaceful societies. Why do you think this is? What about traditional gender roles causes so much strife?



# Cycle of Socialization

The Cycle of Socialization helps us understand the way in which we are socialized to play certain roles and how these roles get reinforced.

Let's look at the cycle.



The cycle begins with our birth. We have no control over this. We are also born without bias, assumptions, or questions. We are either be born into a privileged situation or born into an underprivileged situation.

Then immediately, socialization begins with our family and we are taught how to behave.

Then there are the institutions that continue to shape our views and beliefs and instill within us prejudice or acceptance.

The rules and norms of how we are expected to behave are already in place and we learn that there are rewards for conforming and consequences for rebelling.

The next circle represents the negative result we all feel by being forced to comply with this system.

And then we reach the point where we have to make a decision. We either do nothing and the cycle continues or we can choose to try to change how we behave, how we treat others, and how our institutions are run.

Doing nothing is often the easier choice, especially for those who benefit from the perpetuation of the cycle. Yet doing nothing also hurts everyone.

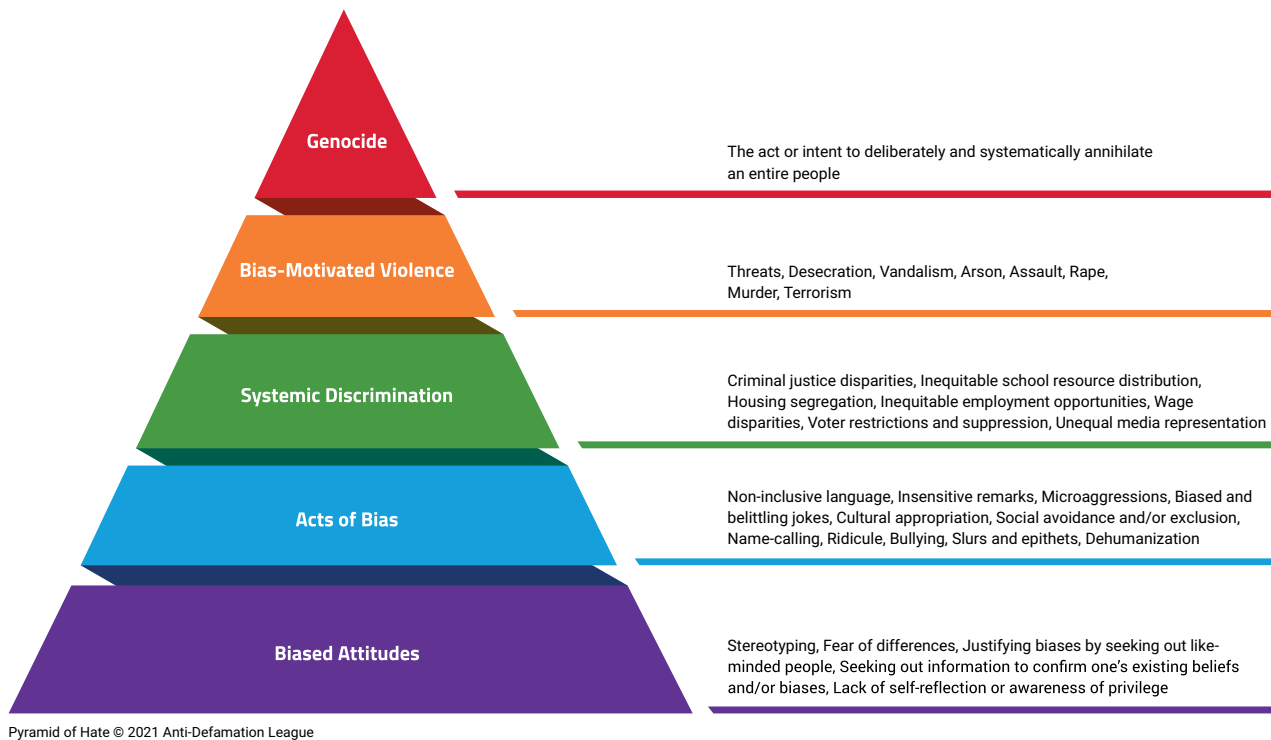
Trying to change is better, but much harder; we will face a lot of pressure to conform.

**At the core are the emotions that fuel the cycle: fear, confusion, and insecurity. But the good news is that if we start acting out of courage and compassion instead, the wheel loses power.**

This diagram is an attempt to show how identities are constructed and reinforced by society. It is a sad depiction of reality, but it also shows that we have the power to build more open, free communities.

## ► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

- What are some examples of how your family taught you how to behave “correctly” as a child? Are these positive or negative memories?
- What are examples of how schools, churches, and society tell you how to behave “correctly”?
- Does their idea of correct always feel like the right thing to you?
- What are some ways you could start breaking this cycle at home, at work, and in your interactions with other people?
  - Could you be more open to people dressing in many different styles?
  - Could you be more open to women wanting to prioritize studying and having careers?
  - Could you find a way to support girls’ studies more?
  - Could you be more open to having men take care of household duties?
  - Could you teach boys how to cook?
  - Could you let boys be more emotional, without telling them not to cry?
  - Could you let girls take the leadership roles at school and at home?
  - What other ideas come to mind?



## Prejudice Awareness

Societies are often comprised of different ethnic, religious, and cultural groups. Sometimes these groups feel like they do not fit together. This may be due to historical reasons, colonial legacy, or more recent events. This leads to tension, which in turn can lead to conflicts.

We are often aware of the elements of our identities that are targeted by another group in society. Our various identities can feel challenged or threatened, both in one-on-one interactions and on a larger regional and national level.

And so we are socialized to like people in our group and not like people from other groups. This behavior is called a **bias**. Bias is prejudice for or against a person or group.

Gordon Allport, a trained psychologist, showed that prejudice can be seen as a series of increasingly more serious actions. These range from simple acts of not liking someone, to avoidance, exclusion, physical violence, and genocide.

If we look at examples of genocide in the 20th century, we see how acts of bias can escalate to genocide over just a few years. Observing how bias can escalate reminds us why it is important for us to address seemingly harmless acts of bias when they occur.

When thinking about prejudice, here are some things to keep in mind:

- **Prejudice is learned and can be unlearned.**
- An effective method of addressing prejudice is to focus on individuals, instead of groups, and seek similarities.
- **People who feel good about themselves do not need to attack others. The more we can show kindness and gentleness towards ourselves, the more we can show it to others.**

The Pyramid of Hate shows how negative behaviors grow in complexity from the bottom to the top. Although the behaviors at each level negatively impact individuals and groups, as one moves up the pyramid, the behaviors have more life-threatening consequences.

Like a pyramid, the upper levels are supported by the lower levels. If people or institutions treat behaviors on the lower levels as acceptable or "normal," it results in the behaviors at the next level becoming more accepted.

The Pyramid of Hate illustrates how violence and genocide are acts that built upon the acceptance of behaviors, such as discrimination and bullying, described in the lower levels of the pyramid.

## ► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

It is important to say that we have all participated in the Pyramid of Hate at some level. **The more honest we can be about our previous actions and the more we can reflect on this, the better we are at defying hate and instead spreading kindness and peace.**

- Looking at the different levels, what actions can you admit to having done?
- What could you do to make up for them?
  - Could you vow to not do them again?
  - Could you apologize to someone you have harmed?
- What other options can you think of to help spread peace?

## The Role of Meaningful Inter-Group Dialog

Meaningful dialog between groups, especially between communities of different religions, beliefs, or cultural backgrounds, can help lower tensions or suspicions between groups.

A lack of meaningful inter-group communication and isolation from each other is often identified as a significant contributing factor to inter-group tensions. These are the situations in which hostility, discrimination, hate speech, and incitement to violence become more likely. This is especially true in situations where there is a history of inter-group tensions that have escalated in the past.

### **Dialog can help de-escalate tensions.**

Importantly, in order to be effective, dialog must provide the space for a genuine, rather than symbolic, exchange of views. There must also be space to discuss differences and disagreements. Dialog should also be inclusive, allowing for community representation beyond traditional leaders. It is especially important to bring the voices of women, girls, youth, and displaced/minority communities to the forefront.

Informal exchanges between communities, for example in the context of sports, cultural exchanges, or when designed to address practical issues of common concern, can also prove to be important trust and relationship-building exercises.

## ► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

- Have you ever participated in an inter-group dialog?
- Could you imagine working to bring together different groups in order to engage in a meaningful discussion of how to support peace?
- What small step could you take to engage in inter-group dialog?
  - Could you reach out to just one other person, who is not in your group, and start on a personal level?
  - Could you start a program at a local school or church, where people could come together to meet and talk?
  - What other ideas can you think of that would help promote open dialog?
- Why is it so important to create a space where people can talk safely, respectfully, and freely?

## The Role of Community Leaders

Community and religious leaders have a strong potential to influence the lives and behaviors of others. When they speak out, their messages can have a large impact. That is why leaders have an important role to play by speaking out against hate speech and violence.

Here are some ideas for everyone to follow, but especially anyone who considers themselves a leader:

- Spread messages of peace, tolerance, acceptance, and mutual respect.
- Take action to reduce tensions between communities, especially by fostering dialog and hosting events that bring people together peacefully.
- Disseminate positive messages online and offline. Spread these messages of peace in local languages, including in local dialects, when possible.
- Issue and circulate reports of religious, community, and ethnic statements and decrees by leaders and authorities denouncing incitement and/or offering alternative messages.
- Engage youth and have them try to find ways of addressing injustice in a constructive, peaceful way.
- Listen to and address the grievances of youths, even when what they say is shocking or controversial.
- Identify and train “youth ambassadors” to become dedicated actors and peer-educators in countering radicalization and violent extremism.

## Mistaken Identities Podcast on BBC Radio 4

British-born, Ghanaian-American philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah explores confusions of identity through an examination of four central kinds of identity: creed, country, color, and culture. He argues against a mythical, romantic view of nationhood, saying instead it should rest on a commitment to shared values.

Listen to the programs on the accompanying USB key.

CREED: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b07z43ds>

COUNTRY: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b07zz5mf>

COLOR: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b080t63w>

CULTURE: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b081lkkj>



5

# Mental Health, Trauma, and Healing

# Contents

## Talking about Mental Health and Trauma

- Labeling Emotions
- I am versus I Feel

## What is Trauma?

- Types of Trauma
- PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder)
- Myths and Misconceptions about Trauma
- What are Triggers?

## Addressing Trauma

## Tools to Help Calm Yourself

- Mindful Breathing
- Grounding

## Talking about Trauma

- Window of Tolerance
- Attention Switching
- Locking up Negative Memories
- Other Ways of Addressing Trauma
- Laughter for Trauma Healing in Cameroon

## Helping Someone Who Experienced Trauma

## Resources for Caregivers

- Additional Resources



*Community and youth leaders meet  
to discuss the impact of hate speech.  
Photo by Shillie Paul*

# Mental Health and Trauma

*It is common for people to have experienced stressful and upsetting events. Even if those events happened to them a long time ago, those events can still affect how a person thinks and feels today. Things that happen to us can affect how we react to other people and situations many years later.*

*Trauma is the person's experience of a situation – and how they think and feel about it afterwards. No two people will have the exact same reaction to a given situation and no reaction is wrong or shameful.*

*Lynn A. Kovich*

## Talking About Mental Health and Trauma

Let us begin this chapter on mental health and trauma by making this statement: **almost everyone has experienced some form of trauma in their life.** Any stressful or upsetting event can lead to trauma, and we have all experienced stressful and upsetting events.

Very often, when we hear the word trauma or think about mental health, we think only about those people who are already on the brink of breaking or who no longer function within society. But that is a very narrow understanding of mental health.

**Much like we all have a certain level of physical health that changes from season to season, we all have a level of mental health that changes with time and experiences.**

**Physical and mental health work together to create our overall health and well-being.**

There is a spectrum of physical health.

There is ideal health, where everything is working and we are free of pain.

There are minor injuries, like a bloody knee.  
There are injuries, like a broken leg.

And there are severe injuries, like many broken bones or cancer.

**There is a spectrum of mental health.**

There is ideal mental health, where everything feels effortless and we are free of pain.

There are small traumas that we might not even notice, except that we feel angry or irritated or sad.

There are large traumas that disrupt our sleep, make it hard to concentrate, and make us very sad.

And there are major traumas that make living very hard.

**With both mental and physical health, many of us often ignore our bodies.** We still go to work when sick. We feel pain in our body, but push on. Something is broken, but we don't have time or money to tend to it. But this often only makes the injury worse or delays healing.

We also **often hide the effects of trauma, even from ourselves.** We ignore the sense of anger or irritation or blame others' actions for it. We ignore the lack of energy or sadness. We go about our days, we work, we do what has to be done.

But the question is: how much better would we feel if we were open to talking about our emotions and past traumas? How much **more joy and peace** could it bring to us and our communities if we took better

care of our mental health? How much more peaceful could life be if we addressed the source of our anger and sadness?

That is what the focus of this chapter will be. We will begin by discussing mental health and trauma. And we will then talk about effective ways to begin to move towards greater health and well-being.

This material is designed to be used by anyone.

Read it. Share what you learn.

And let us work towards increasing our resilience and bringing more joy and peace into our lives and the lives of those in our community.

Working towards healing is good for individuals. But it is also good for communities and important in the

context of peacebuilding. Unaddressed trauma can show up in violence and carelessness towards other people.

So the more we learn to address emotions in a helpful way, the easier it is to show compassion, form connections, and work together to mitigate hate speech and build a peaceful society. So let's begin!

## ► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

- Growing up, were emotions and mental health talked about?
- Who do you talk to when you need to talk about hard things?
- What small action could you take to make talking about mental health more acceptable in your community or home?

## Labeling Emotions

*Most people find it hard to talk about their feelings and emotions.*

*Many of us grew up in families and cultures that taught us to not share our emotions too much. Some people have an easy time sharing positive emotions, like joy or excitement, but are uncomfortable sharing negative emotions, like fear or anger.*

*Many have been taught that it is okay for women to talk about emotions, but not for men. And many of us have a hard time naming and understanding what we are feeling, even if we try.*

*But the good news is that **labeling and talking about our emotions is a skill we can learn**. And the more we practice it, the better we get.*

*Why is this an important skill to have? Because talking about emotions has many positive benefits.*

*It helps us think and reflect on our situation more clearly.  
It helps us communicate more accurately.  
It increases self-control.  
It is good for our physical health.*

*So how do we start gaining all of these benefits?*

*Let's start by **creating a list** of all possible feelings. How many can we name? Maybe happy, sad, angry? That's a good start.*

*What other feelings are there? Maybe calm? Upset,*

*worried, or nervous? Confused, lonely, left out? Peaceful, excited?*

*The more words we have to describe emotions, the better we will be at analyzing what we are feeling. This is not a test of vocabulary.*

*Instead, it helps us notice the small differences between feelings. For example, what is the difference between calm and happy? Having different words helps us notice these differences more.*

*The **next step** is to read the signals your body is giving you.*

*Do your muscles feel tight?  
Is your back sore?  
Are your hands sweaty?  
Is your heart racing?  
Do you have a lot of energy? Low energy?  
Are you colder than usual? Hotter than usual?*

*The **last step** is to reflect on your current situation and see which feelings from your list fit your present reality.*

*For example, imagine your arms and hands feel tight, your heart is beating faster than usual, and your breathing is fast. What is happening? These signals could be a sign of fear. Maybe you see something that signals danger. But these signals could also mean that you are excited, because someone you have not seen in a long time is about to walk through the door. Same signal, different emotion.*

*Labeling emotions means knowing how to read the signals from our body, reflecting on the situation we are in, and drawing from our list of emotions to then put this information into words, even if we only say to ourselves, "I am feeling (emotion) because (situation)."*

Here are some examples:

*A friend is very late to a meeting and our first thought is that we are angry. But if we think about the situation more, we notice that we are actually feeling worried, because they aren't usually this late and we don't know if something happened to them on the way to the meeting. If we take the time to reflect, we can more accurately tell them we were worried and now are relieved to see them, and not accidentally spread anger.*

*Our family is being very loud and we are trying to study. We notice how tense our body is and at first think we are angry. But if we think about all of the elements of the situation, we notice that we are actually nervous and*

*anxious about our upcoming test and that this feeling of being tense has nothing to do with the family being loud. So we can then tell them that we are nervous and ask for help in studying instead of yelling at them to be more quiet.*

## ► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

- How many different emotions can you name? Write them all down and try to think about how you would describe that feeling. Compare your list with others and add any to your list that feel important.
- Which emotion words do you often use to describe how you are feeling? Which words do you rarely use?
- Think over situations you experienced in the last weeks and try to label what you were feeling in those moments.
- Do you more often talk with friends and family about your positive or negative emotions? Why?

## I am versus I feel

It is easy to let our emotions, especially negative ones, take over and fuel conflict.

*Very often, this is because we do not take the time to reflect on our emotions or we **over-identify** with them. How often have we said something like, "I am so angry!" to someone else. But the problem with this statement is that we are letting anger define our identity. We become the person who is angry and angry people act out in negative ways. But if we change the sentence to "I am feeling so angry!," now we are people with complex identities who also feel things, including anger.*

*Admitting we are feeling something helps us analyze what is going on, whether anger is actually the best word to describe what we are feeling, and we can work to come up with more healthy ways to address this anger.*

*I FEEL leaves us in control of our feelings.  
I AM puts the emotion in control.*

*It might be a small shift, but the more we can apply this idea to negative emotions, the more we can work to find peaceful ways to address our feelings.*

*I FEEL lets the emotion be acknowledged, but also allows it to move on and not become part of our identity.*

## ► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

- How might this idea of changing a sentence from I AM to I FEEL be helpful in dealing with hard emotions?
- What other situations could this be helpful in? Here are some examples to discuss:
  - I am sick versus I am feeling sick
  - I can't go on versus I feel like I can't go on
  - I am always scared versus I often feel scared
  - I am unemployed versus I am a person who is unemployed
  - I am disabled versus I am a person with a disability



# What is Trauma?

**Trauma is your body's emotional response to a terrible event.**

These terrible events are called traumatic events, because they cause emotional trauma.

Another way to say it is that trauma is any event that severely threatens your physical survival or safety or sense of emotional and psychological safety and integrity.

Traumatic events are marked by a sense of helplessness, fear of injury or death, and loss of innocence. **Trauma often splits the world into a before-and-after view of the world and of ourselves.** We see ourselves as one person before the event and another afterwards.

It is important to note that **trauma is a natural response**. It is your mind and body's way of reacting to these traumatic situations and trying its best to process what happened.

Trauma lives both in the mind and the body.

In the mind, it can often lead to trouble sleeping, difficulty feeling calm, sadness, anger, fear, anxiety, difficulty connecting with others emotionally, panic, disordered eating, and depression.

In the body, unresolved trauma can lead to physical illnesses, such as stomach troubles, headaches, muscle tensions in your neck and back, rashes, and other symptoms.

(Please note that these can also be symptoms of other illnesses and when in doubt, you should go see a doctor if you can.)

## Types of Trauma

There are then different ways to think about trauma.

One way psychologists think about trauma is in terms of capital-T Trauma (as in, big Trauma) and little-t trauma (smaller trauma).

**The horrific events that often lead to big Trauma are:**

- violence in the community
- witnessing others being harmed or victimized

- war and combat experiences
- death of a loved one, such as a parent or child
- experiencing a serious injury or disease, like cancer or HIV/AIDS
- death threats
- kidnappings
- being strip searched
- burning of property
- IED explosions
- imprisonment
- physical abuse, including any violence, slaps, or beating
- sexual abuse, including unwanted touching, rape, and incest
- emotional abuse, including being put down, mocked, belittled, and silenced
- childhood neglect, including hunger, forced separation, or emotionally unstable parents
- natural disasters, such as earthquakes, fires, floods, and hurricanes

These tend to be the events most people think about when we talk about trauma.

But importantly, **smaller trauma** can also be caused by things we don't often even think of as trauma, such as:

- being bullied
- growing up in a family that argues a lot
- being made fun of and/or excluded, especially in childhood
- infidelity in a relationship
- getting divorced
- having constant financial worries
- undergoing medical procedures
- being stopped and searched

These are all less intense events, but especially if they continue over a long period of time, they are perceived as a traumatic event by the mind and body.

Here is the important part to note: **when your body is reacting to trauma, it doesn't know the difference between big trauma and little trauma**. It just knows it is experiencing something disturbing and reacts accordingly.

Because of this, it doesn't make sense to compare trauma.

**What was very traumatic for one person, might not be as traumatic for another person.**

We are all different and we all react to situations differently. Even people experiencing the same traumatic event will be traumatized differently.

The important thing to understand is that **all trauma is valid**. Even if something doesn't seem like a big deal to one person, it can be traumatic for another.

We need to be compassionate and let people tell their own stories and decide for themselves which events were traumatic. We should not judge. Trauma is trauma.

## ► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

- Can you describe the difference between "big" and "little" trauma in your own words?
- Looking at the list of things that can cause trauma, which ones are the most likely to be causes of trauma to you and in your community?
- When people in your community or around you talk about trauma, do they include the "little" traumas or only include the "big" trauma? Why do you think that is?
- Is it freeing or scary to realize that we have all experienced trauma in our life? Why?

## PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder)

Trauma often manifests shortly after the traumatic event. Sometimes within hours, sometimes within a few weeks or months. At times, the effects of trauma don't appear until many years later.

However, with proper help and treatment, **we can work through trauma and arrive at a place of healing**. Healing means that the trauma is incorporated into our life story, but the event doesn't hold the power to harm us any longer.

Yet for some people, their trauma doesn't leave them. These people are often diagnosed with PTSD - Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

What are the symptoms of PTSD - Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder?

People with PTSD often have intense, disturbing thoughts and feelings related to their experience that last long after the traumatic event has ended. They may relive the event through flashbacks or nightmares; they may feel sadness, fear or anger; and they may feel detached or estranged from other people.

People with PTSD are more likely to engage in self-harming behaviors and/or die of suicide.

As with all mental health, PTSD exists on a spectrum from mild to severe symptoms.

**PTSD is real and has a very real impact on people's everyday life.**

Trauma that is the result of interpersonal violence, such as rape, is more likely to lead to PTSD than non-violent trauma, such as a natural disaster. Traumatic events involving death are also very likely to lead to PTSD, especially if these events are not properly addressed in a supportive, healing environment.

While PTSD is harder to treat than other forms of trauma, with proper treatment, PTSD can become less severe or all together go away.

While all trauma often leaves people feeling helpless, the good news is that you do have control over your healing.

**You can take active steps to feel better and by doing so, regain your sense of control.** We will discuss some of these steps later in the chapter.

## ► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

- Do you know anyone who has been affected by PTSD? How has it impacted their lives and the lives of their families and loved ones?
- What actions could you take to help support people with PTSD?

## Myths and Misconceptions about Trauma

Here are some common myths and misconceptions that we would like to dispel.

**Only very severe events lead to trauma.**

As mentioned earlier, there is a wide range of events that can be traumatic, depending on the person and the situation. Often, especially if many smaller traumatic events are present, our bodies respond very similarly to how we would respond to a larger traumatic event.

**Everyone experiences PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder).**

No, PTSD is a specific form of trauma. Many factors need to be considered before one is diagnosed with PTSD.

**Trauma symptoms manifest immediately after a traumatic event.**

No, for many people, the first reactions after trauma are shock or denial. It usually takes a few months before trauma symptoms are noticeable and at times, if the trauma is repressed enough, it can take years.

### **Anyone suffering from trauma is unstable and violent.**

No, angry outbursts and violence don't always occur. How a person reacts to a traumatic event varies from person to person. But feelings of anger are also a normal part of the healing process. The important part is to distinguish between feeling anger and acting upon anger.

### **Trauma is limited to a specific age group.**

No, all age groups are affected by trauma. Children are often especially vulnerable to trauma, because they do not yet have the mental capacity to make sense of the world and often assume that they are to blame for the trauma they are experiencing. They often internalize trauma and suffer from a sense of low self-worth. Children can also suffer from PTSD, with most showing symptoms only several years after the traumatic event happened.

### **Recovery is impossible.**

Absolutely not! With the right systems in place, including creating a social support system, learning to use coping mechanisms, and working through your trauma, healing is possible for any and everyone.

## ► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

- How many of these myths have you heard?
- What could you do to help spread the truth and dispel these myths?

## What are Triggers?

You might have heard people talking about things that "trigger" them. What do they mean by that?

**Triggers are anything that make you suddenly recall a previous traumatic experience and put your body and mind into a state of alert and fear.**

For example, someone who has experienced gun trauma may feel fine until they hear a car backfire loudly, and this sound triggers them, bringing back (consciously or subconsciously) the memory of the traumatic event and putting their body into high alert.

There are many things that can trigger us. Here is a list:

### PEOPLE

- Seeing either the actual perpetrator or a person who looks similar to the perpetrator. Clothing (such as a uniform), scents, a voice, or something similar can all be triggers.

### THOUGHTS

- Consciously thinking about the traumatic event can also trigger you. This is why it is important to only address trauma in a safe environment and only once you have learned methods to calm yourself down when triggered.
- Other emotions can also be triggers, such as feeling lonely.

### THINGS

- Buildings or places, especially dark spaces or dark streets or places tied to the traumatic event.
- Signs, posters, songs, poetry, etc.

### SCENTS

- Fuel (Petrol or Kerosene)
- Perfumes
- Human waste
- The smell of nature (warm winds, smell of water, etc.)

### SHOWS, NEWS, MOVIES

- Watching a combat movie
- Documentaries about abuse
- Any movie, book, poem, song that addresses either the trauma directly or is tied to the scene of trauma.

### SITUATIONS

- Loneliness
- Being told to do something and not feeling in control
- Conflicts in relationships
- Abuse situations
- Additional traumatic events
- Lack of power and control

It is important to note that while the list above details many negative things, **positive things can also be triggers**. The birth of a child can be a trigger for example. Other otherwise positive triggers could be seeing other people laughing, enjoying themselves, lovely music, a couple in love, beautiful scenery, or similar things.

The takeaway: **your triggers are unique to you and your situation**. What triggers one person will not necessarily be a trigger for someone else. So **learn to listen to your body**: when do you feel yourself suddenly feeling panicked or scared? Or tense? Or suddenly very sad?

Try to find out what your triggers might be, so that you can be more proactive in telling others about it and finding ways to avoid being triggered as much as possible.

## ► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

- All of us have triggers, the results are just more or less intense for each of us. Can you think of what your triggers might be? Are there things

(sounds, scents, spaces, people) that instantly make you feel uneasy, even if these things don't seem to bother anyone else?

- What steps could you take to try to avoid triggers or to calm yourself down in these situations?
- What could you do to let other people know it is okay to talk about their triggers?

# Addressing Trauma

We began this chapter by stating that everyone has experienced some form of trauma, then talked about the types of trauma and triggers.

Now that we all have a better understanding of trauma, how do we begin to address it?

Perhaps the first and most important idea is that before you dive into your experiences and try to work through what happened, **you need to cultivate tools to help calm you down when anxiety or panic arises.**

So for this, we will cover two techniques: **mindful breathing** and grounding.

# Tools to Help Calm Yourself

## Mindful Breathing

We all know that when we get scared, we tend to either hold our breath or start breathing too quickly and too shallowly. So one very effective way to calm yourself down in any situation is to intentionally focus on your breathing. This sends signals to your brain that you are safe, which in turn sends out chemicals to calm the body.

### HOW TO BREATHE

A note on breathing: In order to get the full benefit, you want to breathe deep into your lungs. When you breathe in, you want to feel your stomach rising up. If your chest puffs out instead, it is a sign that you are breathing too shallowly.

Start by placing a hand on your stomach, right above your belly button. Now try to breathe in and push against the hand. Do you see your hand rising up as your stomach expands? Great! Then you are breathing deeply. This is the type of breathing you should use for all of the following exercises.

### 8-4-8-4 BREATHING

Begin by breathing in for 8 seconds, feeling the space above your belly button expand. Hold your breath for 4 seconds.

Exhale for 8 seconds, trying to push out all remaining air at the end. Your stomach should be pulling in when you exhale.

Hold your breath for 4 seconds.

Repeat as many times as you like. **One minute can already make a big difference.**

This breathing practice can be used to calm yourself down when triggered or in a difficult situation. It can also be done before or after a difficult task or interaction.

You can vary how long the inhales are. Feel free to do what works for you, just make sure your exhale is as long (or longer) than your inhale.

This exercise can be done anywhere, at any time.

If possible, sit somewhere comfortable. Notice the contact your body makes with the floor or the chair and how nice it feels. You can close your eyes, if that feels good, or keep them open, looking but not focusing on anything in particular.

### More options

This 8-4-8-4 breathing exercise can be done when you are in a situation that is making you anxious.

But it is also very helpful to do it daily, when calm, to practice it. That way, you will feel more ready and skilled at using this breath when you are anxious and needing to calm down.

So take 5 minutes a day and sit and breathe.

When breathing, you can choose to only focus on counting.

Or you can focus on your breath and thinking In-Hold-Out-Hold.

Or you can focus on **repeating a word**, like strong or calm.

You can also let your mind wander. Whenever a thought or feeling comes up, just notice it, name it, and let it go. Do not engage with the thoughts, but just note them. You can say to yourself, "Oh! A thought!" or "Ah! An emotion!" and then let it pass on. This technique is called **Noting**. It teaches you to see that you do not have to engage with every thought or emotion, but rather that you are in control of when you want to think about something and when you do not want to think about it

## ► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

- Have you ever practiced mindful breathing? How did it feel?
- During what time of the day could you find a few minutes to practice mindful breathing? In the early morning? Before sleep? After cooking?

## Grounding

Another technique that is useful when you're feeling overwhelmed or triggered is called **Grounding**.

The idea is that trauma often takes you back to a past event and out of the present moment in which you are safer. So grounding is a way to remind your mind and body that you are in the present moment.

Grounding uses your sense of smell, touch, taste, sight, and sound to do that.

Here are some options:

For a few seconds, look around and name all of the objects you can see around you.

Focus on the contact your body makes with your chair and/or the floor.

Hold a hot or cold drink in both hands and fully feel the hot or cold temperature.

Smell a food, drink, flower, or other item.

Take a sip of tea or coffee and truly taste it. Try to name all of the flavors.

Splash water on your face or put your hands in a bowl of water and feel how they feel.

Take a few steps and feel your feet making contact with the ground.

Focus your attention on sounds, first those near you, then those further away. Try to pick out all of the sounds you hear, from the quietest bird to the loudest motor.

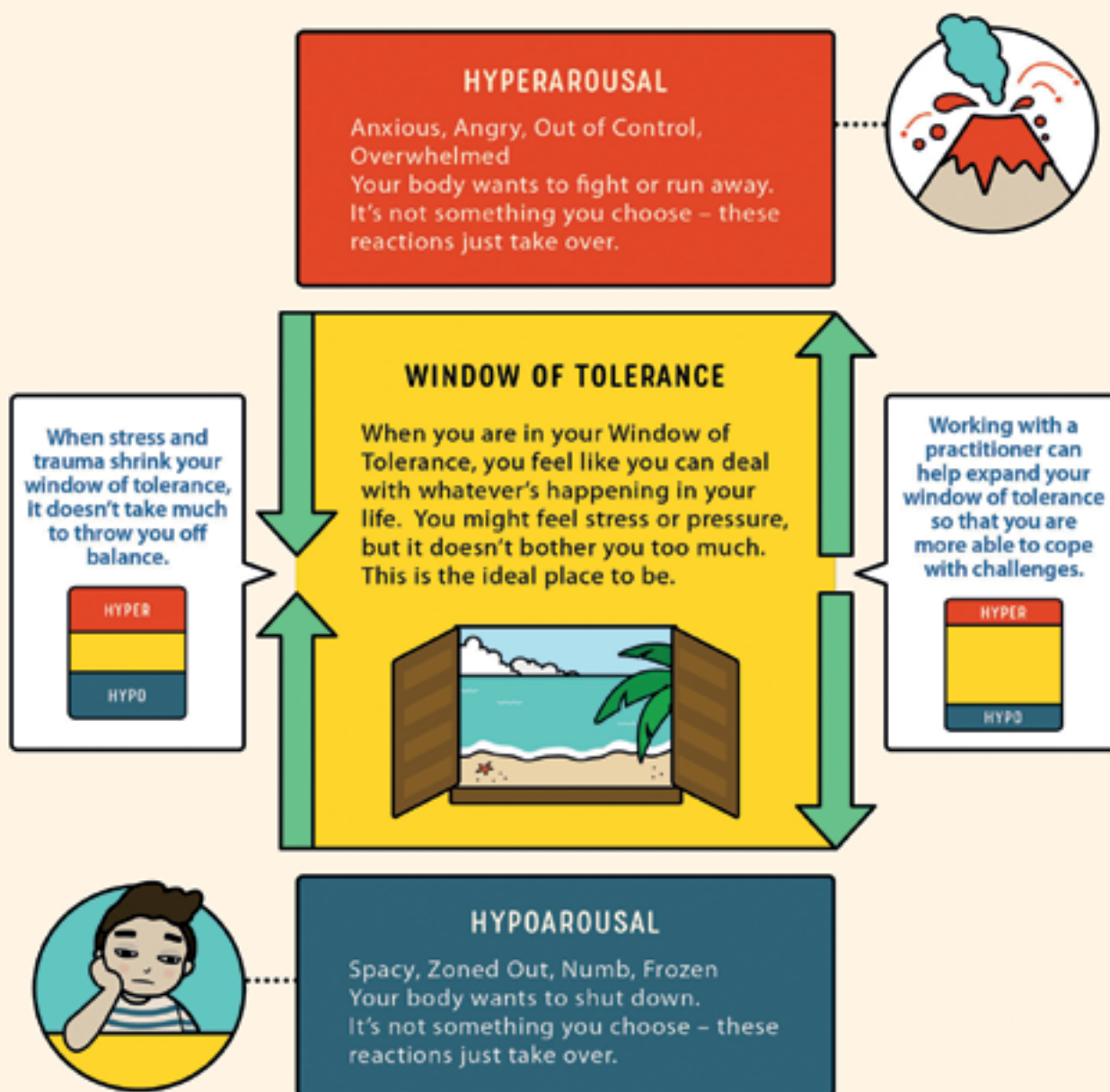
## ► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

- Which of your senses do you connect with the most? Sight? Smell? Sound? Touch? Taste?
- What are some of your favorite things that would work to ground you? Is there a particular smell? Or something you could look at?



# Talking about Trauma

## How Trauma Can Affect Your Window Of Tolerance



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## Window of Tolerance

Research shows that we begin to heal our trauma by talking about it with a supportive person, whether that be a friend, family member, or therapist.

If we do not have someone who feels safe to talk to, we can also begin to address the trauma on our own, working it through in our mind or journaling about it. **Although talking about a traumatic event is hard, in the long run, it is worth it.**

There is something in psychology called the **Window of Tolerance**. Your window of tolerance is the mindset in which you feel you can effectively deal with life and the problems and daily tasks you are faced with.

If you exceed your window of tolerance, you quickly lose your ability to reason or easily complete tasks that would otherwise not be difficult. You are also not able to work through past traumatic events if you are not in your window of tolerance.

**The problem is that traumatic events shrink your window of tolerance.** It often does not take much for a traumatized person to leave this window. But the good news is that the more you work to address and heal, the more your window of tolerance will again grow larger.

Whether in talking to someone or working on memories by yourself, one way to safely approach memories of trauma without leaving your window of tolerance is through a technique called **Attention Switching**.

## Attention Switching

How does **Attention Switching** work? Start by bringing to mind an image that makes you feel safe, connected or protected. Perhaps the image is of being embraced by someone you love or of sitting together with a friend drinking tea. It can be anything that brings up a feeling of being safe and cared for.

Then consciously let go of that image and move to engage with an image of the traumatic event you are struggling with, knowing that you can switch back to your safe image at any point if you feel yourself leaving your window of tolerance. **If it feels too much or too heavy, it is.**

Leave that thought and return to your happy place.

Then, when you are ready, you can again go back to the negative image, and use this method to switch back and forth.

**Make it a conscious process as you switch between the image and the one you are struggling with. Talk to yourself as you switch. Remember this is not an exercise to block out your experience, but rather to exert control over it.**

In the beginning, you might only be able to engage with the negative image for a few seconds. That is absolutely fine. Healing takes time.

And gradually, you will be able to stay within your window of tolerance while addressing trauma for longer periods.

It is important to take it **slowly**.

### ► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

- What image could you create in your mind that makes you feel safe and loved and protected?
- Does the idea of Attention Switching make sense to you? What is the benefit of using this technique?

## Locking Up Negative Memories

Another technique that can help in feeling safe while also addressing trauma is to create an image in your mind of a place where **you can lock up the memories of your bad experiences.**

You can then put the painful memories in there and only open it when you want to. This also helps you **gain control, not over the past event, but how you choose to interact** with it in the here and now.

### ► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

- What image could you create in your mind that would be a place to lock up negative memories?

## Other Ways of Addressing Trauma

Here are other ways to help feel in control while working through trauma.

- Give yourself time to grieve and accept that something traumatic happened.
- Affirm your resilience. You are strong and survived

the traumatic event and you have the inner strength that it will take to heal from the trauma.

- You can repeat phrases to yourself like:
  - I am safe right now.
  - I am no longer in that situation.
  - I can get through this.
  - I can do hard things.
  - This too will pass.
  - That was a painful experience, but I am not living it now.
- For some, religion and getting to talk to God helps.
- Feeling physically strong can help, so when possible, eat well and try to move your body by exercising.
- Find something that brings you joy, whether it is watching the sunset, drawing, singing, or any other activity that lets you lose yourself in that activity.
- Spend time with people who make you feel cared for as often as possible.
- Find a support group, if possible.

Know that regardless of what sort of trauma you have experienced, it was not your fault. And you cannot change what happened, so spending time thinking about what you could have done differently to avoid the trauma is often more harmful than helpful. We cannot change the past, we can only learn to incorporate it into our life and find strength in being survivors.

The more that we can identify limiting beliefs (I shouldn't have been out walking, I should have known better, I shouldn't have asked more questions, I should have been able to rescue them,...) and work to reframe them (bad people do bad things, but they do not have power over me any longer or hard things happen, but I am strong and will be able to cope with this), the more your journey will move towards healing.

## ► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

- Which of these ideas about addressing trauma feel like they might work best for you?
- Could you imagine joining or creating a group in which people could come to talk about their trauma?
- What makes you feel strong?
- Who (or what image) can you turn to when you need to feel protected?

# Laughter for Trauma Healing in Cameroon

*by Amindeh Blaise Atabong*

YAOUNDE, CAMEROON – For Canisia, a woman traumatized by the conflict in the English-speaking part of Cameroon, May 26 was a day of laughter, the first in 18 months.

"This event has wiped out my sorrow and given me the impetus to move on. But I still feel for the thousands of other Anglophone refugees and internally displaced persons who have not had this experience," Canisia added, bursting into laughter as she watched another comedian perform on stage.

Canisia is one of thousands of English-speaking Cameroonians displaced by a drawn-out conflict in the North West and South West regions. She, like many others, has benefited from a local initiative that offers psychological services to address the trauma of the conflict.

Like many displaced people, Canisia has been traumatized by her experiences. But getting psycho-social care is a difficult thing when the priority is often on providing food and shelter to displaced people. Comedians like Senior Pastor are stepping in with a local initiative to fill the gap.

## Laughter Therapy

The 'Laughter Heals' comedy performance is a show created to build cohesion among people and provide an avenue for the psychological healing of broken hearts in Cameroon's fractured community. The host of the show, Senior Pastor, an award-winning Cameroonian comedian, said it was his own small contribution to countering hate speech and bringing relief to victims.

"We gave them hope, laughter, and sadness left [while attending the show]," Senior Pastor said. He notes that the show was six hours long when staged in Yaounde and will be performed in other towns as means allow.

Ntui Olga, an internally displaced person from Kumba who attended the show, said it was awesome. "[For the first time] in a very long time, I could feel like we are in peacetime."

The comedians joked and touched a bit on the conflict in order to make survivors laugh about it. But they did so without any form of prejudice.

The 'Laughter Heals' comedy show was inspired by a project carried out last year by a local organization - Local Youth Corner Cameroon (LOYOC).

## ► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

- Can you imagine helping to bring a comedy show to your community?
- Do you think a comedy show would help with trauma?

- What other events or entertainment might be helpful to those needing encouragement?
- What other events or entertainment might be helpful to those needing encouragement?

# ► Helping Someone Who Experienced Trauma

If someone you know has experienced trauma, the most important thing you can do is listen. Here are some guidelines you can commit to.

### THE SAFE LISTENER'S PROMISE:

- I will listen to understand.
- I will keep what you share private.
- I will not minimize your pain.
- I will not compare your pain with my own.
- I will not give quick solutions.
- I will listen again when you want to share more.

Here are some ways to go about providing initial care:

### MAKE CONTACT

- Establish contact with a trauma survivor by introducing yourself and offering assistance.

### REDUCE ANXIETY

- Try to create a calm atmosphere.
- If available, make sure they are physically comfortable. Offer a blanket or a cup of tea.

### LISTEN

- Make the survivor feel heard and understood.
- Listen well. Simply listening can ease the pain.
- Let them say or not say anything they want to without questioning them or adding comments.
- Let them express any and all emotions without censoring them.
- Listening is more important than asking questions.

### LIFT THEM UP

- Be a voice of support. Encourage them through words of affirmation, reminding them that they are strong and can cultivate skills to work through this trauma.

### INTERPERSONAL RESOURCES

- Encourage and help the survivor to lean on networks of friends, family members, church

members, and community members for support, as applicable.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Mobilize all available medical, financial, and educational resources.

### ENCOURAGE ACTION

- If the situation is one in which it would help to report the violation, or confront a person/family member, etc., discuss the options, weighing the risk.
- Be sure to let them decide on the course of action. Do not push them to do anything they are uncomfortable with.

### FOLLOW UP

- Keep in contact.
- Make contact on the anniversary of the event. This lets them know they are not the only ones carrying the memory of the pain.
- Understand that the period of post-trauma will have highs and lows. Someone might be doing much better one month, and much worse later on. Coping and healing is not a straight path.

### REFERRAL

- If trauma services are available, help them access counseling services.

## ► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

- Can you commit to being a safe listener for others?
- Which of these ideas would comfort you the most?
- Which of these ideas could you offer to others?
- Can you think of someone who has reached out to you when you needed support? What could you do to thank them? Or could you pay it forward by helping someone else?

# Resources for Caregivers

This final section offers resources for caregivers and other humanitarian workers who are working with survivors of traumatic events.

Vicarious trauma, also known as compassion fatigue, is a stress reaction that may be experienced by those consistently being exposed to stories of trauma. That is why it is important to create rituals and routines that help those hearing of trauma to process what they hear.

As with those experiencing trauma firsthand, you are encouraged to pay attention to your:

## PHYSICAL WELLBEING

- Get as much sleep as needed (8-9 hrs)
- Eat healthily
- Build in times of rest throughout the week
- Exercise or get some movement
- Practice mindful breathing
- Journal about your day
- Check in with your body and mind at the end of the day and see where you are holding tension. Work to relieve that.

## NURTURE YOUR SOCIAL SUPPORT SYSTEMS

- Check in with friends or family regularly, if those interactions renew your energy.
- Create boundaries around work and home life.
- Spend time with people who are supportive and caring.

On a daily or weekly basis, there are also some questions you can ask yourself to think about how you are using your time and energy.

## PACE

- How fast am I going? Am I rushing through the day? Do I have any time for my own needs?
- Can I keep up this level of intensity?
- Where can I build in time for reflection and recharging?

## ENERGY

- What are my energy patterns? Do I have more energy in the morning, afternoon, or evening?
- Can I structure my interactions with others around the times I feel most energetic?
- Am I able to organize my day so that I can approach my most challenging tasks when my energy is higher?

- Am I listening to my body when my energy is lower?
- What can I do now to take care of myself and my energy so that I can be more resilient in the long run?

## CHOICE

- Where can I choose to focus my attention?
- What can I choose to let go of, either for now or all together?
- What do I want to ask for in terms of support or help?

## ► QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ◀

- These resources are useful not only for caregivers, but offer good advice for everyone. Looking over the list, which of these tips could you try to include in your life to help support your mental well-being?
- What are some ways we could learn to support each other in taking better care of our well-being?



## Additional Resources

### SHORT FILM:

#### **Jal Tekädä, The Journey of My Life (5 Minutes)**

<https://youtu.be/Xpf1s664Pns>

Jal Tekädä, The Journey of My Life is a short film produced and performed by internally displaced persons (IDPs) at the UN protection of civilians (PoC) site in Bentiu, South Sudan, a town that witnessed some of the most brutal fighting of the conflict. The film tells the story of young IDPs' journeys to seek forgiveness and healing.

#### **Trauma Healing For Refugees**

Platform Africa: Training of Trainers (VIDEO)

<https://youtu.be/7hooaj94PeM>

#### **On the Benefits of Journaling**

<https://www.apa.org/research/action/writing>

#### **South Sudan War | Refugees Trauma Healing Program**

Platform Africa: Introduction by Kigezo (VIDEO)

<https://youtu.be/aB8mi9XR70>

#### **First Draft News: Vicarious Trauma Guide**

<https://firstdraftnews.org/articles/vicarious-trauma-guide/>

#### **Trauma First Aid**

<https://cdn.website-editor.net/3320dce9eaba401abb24a23965629cc3/files/uploaded/Trauma-first-aid-english.pdf>

#### **Conflict is #solvable Podcast**

A podcast by Victor Ochen, Founder and Executive Director for the African Youth Initiative Network (AYINET), about why we need to train local peacebuilders instead of only doing so after trauma has occurred.

<https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/podcast/conflict-is-solvable/>

**Note:** The original version of this chapter was put together by psychologist Charlotte Ainebyoona Kigezo and we are grateful for her insights and the work she has done together with Platform Africa in bringing mental health services to the refugee communities in Uganda.

death  
being stopped at a checkpoint  
physical  
sexual  
emotional  
being strip searched  
**Events that**  
burning of property  
shooting of a loved one  
**VIOLENCE**  
in the  
kidnappings  
IED  
undergoing medical

#DEFYHATENOW

ch threats  
nd searched  
ysical  
**USE** imprisonment  
financial worries  
**t often lead**  
war and combat experiences  
**trauma**  
**CE** witnessing others being harmed  
ne community  
explosions  
al procedures

6

# Common Hate Speech Expressions in Cameroon



*Empowering communities on Combating Hate Speech.  
Photo by Hakim George Hegily*



# Common Hate Speech Expressions in Cameroon

## Francofou

**Origin:** Francofou is one of Cameroon's widely used expressions with a hateful connotation. Cameroon's colonial past has led to there being French-speaking and English-speaking Cameroonians. Tensions exist between the two communities, due to the quest for domination by the one and bitterness over subjugation by the other. Language and behavioral differences add to these tensions and manifest in a number of hate words that are used against each other. Along with francofou, Anglophones refer to Francophones as frog and Francophones use Anglofou or Anglofufu in reference to Anglophones.

**Meaning and use:** The expression translates into "Francophones are fools" – a phrase used to attack anything Francophone or anything with an origin in the French-speaking regions.

**Proper use:** The appropriate use of the expression will simply be "Francophone" to mean any person who uses French as their first language or citizens from the eight French-speaking regions of Cameroon.

## Corrupt Francophones

**Origin:** It is based on the notion of notorious French corruptibility and legendary British integrity perceived in their colonial and post-colonial track records.

**Meaning and use:** Anglophones believe, rightly or wrongly, that Francophones are corrupt and label all Francophones as such, notwithstanding whether individual Francophones demonstrate laudable integrity and Anglophones do not always live up to standards of integrity. It is believed to pervade Francophone Africa, especially Francophone Central Africa, a far cry from perceived better governance in Anglophone Africa (west, east and southern Africa) and a nostalgic past of Anglophone Cameroon (West Cameroon).

**Proper use:** Both in fairness and for the sake of peace, avoid generalizing. Instead, say "some Francophones are corrupt", not "Francophones are corrupt".

## Anglophone: Anglofou

**Origin:** It is perhaps in satire that the term was first used. Challenge Hebdo, a defunct French-language newspaper, used the expression on page 2 of edition Nr. 58 in 1992, attributing it satirically to President Paul Biya. The newspaper ran a satirical conversation between the President and his then Prime Minister, Peter Mafany Musonge, an Anglophone: "Mr President, the people want you to hand over power..." And Biya retorted: "What? What are you saying? Don't bring your Anglofou thing to my house, you understand?"

**Meaning and use:** It is a term to belittle English-speaking Cameroonians. Anglofous is French for "crazy Anglophones."

**Proper use:** Simply call them Anglophones or English-speaking fellow citizens.

## Anglophone: Gauche-Gauche

**Origin:** The origins can be found in Cameroon's colonial history, in which the country was under British and French mandates. The British drive on the left side of the road, the French on the right. Thus, during this period Cameroonians participated in road traffic as applicable in their territory. As boundaries between the two separate territories progressively collapsed around and after independence and reunification, Anglophones drove cars into former French Cameroon and vice-versa. Francophones who witnessed that period say it was curious to see Anglophones driving on the "wrong side," the left side of the road. There are claims vehicles collided as a result. This idea of Anglophones driving on the "wrong side" developed into stigmatization of Anglophones as always being in the wrong. Nowadays, due to a combination of their often poor understanding of French and unfamiliarity with Francophone ways, Francophones feel that Anglophones are always fumbling when they have to follow otherwise clear instructions or guidelines.

Francophones also find Anglophones to be too assertive and too leftist, in the political sense.

**Meaning and use:** Gauche-Gauche is French for

"left-left." Francophones use the expression to imply that Anglophones are always thinking or behaving oddly, either saying "les Anglophones sont toujours à gauche" (Anglophones are always on the left) or "les Anglophone sont gauche-gauche" (Anglophones are left/always getting it wrong).

**Proper use:** Anglophones are different. Francophones are different. Their backgrounds easily explain their peculiarities. So Francophones ought to simply say, "Anglophones are different." That is true, but hurts no one.

## Les Bamenda

**Origin:** Before independence and reunification, most of the present-day Northwest region was called Bamenda Province. Since reunification, the Northwest provincial capital has been called Bamenda city. People of Northwest origin are the Bamenda people. To Francophones, all Anglophones (both Northwesterners and Southwesterners) are Les Bamenda. In a derogatory sense, Francophones call their domestic servants les Bamenda. The latter use originated from the influx of women from the Northwest Region to Francophone cities, especially Yaoundé, who came in search of jobs. Most of them found jobs as domestic servants and were then referred to by members of the households where they worked as Le Bamenda or Les Bamenda.

**Meaning and use:** Les Bamenda is now used to denote cheap labor, someone to be minimized, an underling, a servant, or a slave. Demeaning slangs abound. For example "c'est mon Bamenda", meaning "she is my idiot" or "she is my underling." Francophones, meaning to warn someone not to take them for granted, say "je ne suis pas ton Bamenda," French for "I am not your Bamenda" or "I am not your idiot."

**Proper use:** It should be established that it is wrong to identify someone by their origin when that identity is used in a demeaning and pejorative way. Simply call people by their name (if they are doing work for you) or if referring to people arriving from a region, use the correct term of Northwesterners.

## Graffi

**Origin:** This is a negatively connotated slang term for people from Grassfields or Grassland areas, that is, from the Northwest and West regions. The origin is not entirely known. Most often those using it are forest people, especially Anglophone peoples of the Southwest region and Francophone peoples of the Littoral, Centre, South and East regions.

**Meaning and use:** Graffi is often used in a derogatory sense to label people and implies they are lesser. It is used in sentences like "Look at that Graffi" or "They were there doing their Graffi things."

**Proper use:** Simply call them people from the grasslands and do not associate specific behaviors with regions.

## Nkwa

**Origin:** The origin of this word is unclear, but in some grassland languages the term is used to call someone lazy. It is used by people from the grasslands, who are generally considered hardworking and enterprising, to describe people from the forest areas.

**Meaning and use:** It is used to mean a lazy person or people. For example, "He is a Nkwa" or "He is of the lazy people."

**Proper use:** It is wrong to label or characterize someone based on their origin, especially if that label is pejorative and stigmatizing. Simply call them by their name and allow each individual to be accountable for their behavior.

## Come No Go

**Origin:** This phrase's origin can be traced to the Southwest Region in the 1990s. Then-Governor Oben Peter Ashu, who was from the Southwest Region, used it to mean nuisance settlers, by which he meant the people of Northwest Region origin who made up a vast segment of the Southwest Region population. Decades prior, people from the Northwest Region had come to the Southwest Region to work on the plantations of the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) and settled in the region. Come no go emerged in the 1990s when the Social Democratic Front (SDF), whose leader and most of its founders were people of Northwest origin, was at its peak. That party had won municipal elections in many of the major cities in the Southwest Region and some of the mayors of these cities were now people of Northwest origin. This made the Southwest political elite and a segment of the Southwest general population jittery, fearing that the then-dominant Northwest population would have its way over Southwest interests. People of the Southwest Region felt that the political fate of the region was being decided by non-indigenous people, hence the phrase and negative outburst.

**Meaning and use:** It means "came and did not go back." The governor implied that people of Northwest Region origin were nuisance settlers and implied they should go back to the region they came from.

**Proper use:** When referring to various people, simply use the name of the region, such as calling them people from the Northwest or Southwest Region.

## Bayangi, Akpara, Ashawo, Vendeusse de Piment

**Origin:** The origin of akpara is not known. Ashawo is used in much of West Africa, especially Nigeria. Both of these terms are associated with the reputation of Bayangi women as sexually promiscuous and willing to engage in prostitution. Historically, the Bayangi were among the first people to migrate in considerable numbers to settle in other parts of the country. A neighbourhood in Douala was named Quartier Bayangi, where city-dwellers claimed prostitutes were easy to find and was seen as Douala's red light district. Other common terms used degradingly are the French terms wolowos, maboya, and more recently, vendeuse de piment.

**Meaning and use:** All of these labels are used to mean a sex worker (prostitute). The use is problematic because it associates a particular tribe with this work. Yet no particular tribe or ethnic group can be exclusively associated with sex work, nor can any be absolved.

**Proper use:** When talking about sex workers, use that term. Do not use the terms listed above as code for sex workers and do not stigmatize one specific group as being a people who engage in this profession.

## Banso, Bali ,Cheap Girls

**Origin:** This slur is based on the mistaken belief that girls and women from those two tribes of the Northwest Region are "easy," meaning that they are easily convinced to engage in sexual activities. This belief is often held by people from other tribes also of the Northwest Region and was further spread when a local Bamenda musician sang a song that became popular that mocked the various ethnic groups over qualities and behaviors considered to be their characteristics.

**Meaning and use:** This term is problematic not only because it demeans the girls and women from these tribes by calling them "cheap," but it also is problematic because it implies that there is a correct amount of resistance that women should put up against the advances of men. This level of resistance is a way that men control the behavior of all women.

**Proper use:** Do not generalize when speaking of people. Every person is unique. So do not lump all Banso and Bali women together.

## 99.999 Sense

**Origin:** In the early 1990s the Lebialem Division in the Southwest Region was created out of the Fontem Subdivision, formerly part of the Manyu Division. The euphoria of the Lebialem people over their "independence," as they called it, was viewed negatively by other people and mocked. The Lebialem Division comprises about five tribes in two ethnic blocs and the people are generally called the Bangwa. Bangwa are often seen as overly clever and crafty.

**Meaning and use:** The 99.999 Sense implies the Bangwa are only a fraction of a percent less intelligent than God. As such, the label bears both positive and negative connotations and is sometimes humorously received by the Bangwa. On the one hand, the Bangwa are considered intelligent. On the other hand, this intelligence is also linked to being crafty and deceptive.

**Proper use:** To be on the safe side, simply say that someone is intelligent or smart, without using the 99.999 sense term.

## Kata

**Origin:** 7 Kata refers to an old legend about the Bafut, a tribe near Bamenda. According to lore, seven Bafut men once head-loaded the car of a European colonial explorer, while he was seated inside, across an impassable portion of a damaged road in order to enable the European to reach their village. The term Kata comes from local vocabulary and means head-load cushion, so 7 Kata refers to the seven men who head-loaded the car.

**Meaning and use:** This term has two very distinct uses. On the one hand, it is used both to mock the Bafut for their servility (towards the colonialist and in general). On the other hand, it is used by Anglophone separatists in Bafut to denote resilience, strength, and determination. The term Kata comes from local vocabulary and means head-load cushion.

**Proper use:** Avoid using this term and simply say someone is strong, determined, or resilient.

## L'age de Kumba

**Origin:** There is no history or reason for the existence of this myth, but Francophones often claim that all documents (especially birth certificates) issued in Kumba, in the Southwest Region, are fake.

**Meaning and use:** L'age de Kumba is French for "Kumba age," which implies a fake age. Another

usage is née à Kumba, French for “born in Kumba.” It suggests one of two things: either that the birth certificate details of anyone born in Kumba are unreliable or that if someone was born elsewhere, they go to Kumba to falsify their birth certificate. The use of this phrase also suggests that people from that area, and Anglophones in general, use fake birth certificates and fake other documents as well.

**Proper use:** There is no evidence that documents are falsified in Kumba and even if that were the case, there is also no evidence that records are not falsified elsewhere. This phrase should therefore be avoided. It generalizes a negative view of a group of people.

## Blackleg

**Origin:** The term blackleg comes from Britain, where it was used to describe strikebreakers – people who continued working when all others were on strike. The expression is linked to the rook bird, whose legs are black. Rooks were thought to have thieving habits because they stole food from other birds. So the term blackleg implies that someone is willing to go against a strike in order to benefit themselves and thereby steal from others.

**Meaning and use:** In Cameroon, blackleg is used in protest movements to label those who oppose the protest or collaborate with the oppressor. In the current Anglophone protest movement, fellow Anglophones opposed to the protest or viewed as collaborating with the oppressor (government defence and security forces) are tagged blackleg and run the risk of physical attacks or even assassination.

**Proper use:** There is no form of this expression that is neutral. Avoid and simply refer to people as those opposed to the movement.

## Ambazonians, Ambazozos, Ambaboys

**Origin:** The Republic of Ambazonia or Ambaland is the name given by Anglophone separatists to the self-proclaimed state comprising the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon. The term was first used in the years after reunification, inspired by Amba Bay on the coast of Limbe. Ambazonia is used in place of Southern Cameroons to not confuse this entity with the South Region (Southern Cameroon). The term Ambazonian is also a way to avoid using the term Cameroon, which separatists dislike and view as a reminder of their annexation by French Cameroon.

**Meaning and use:** These terms refer to the separatist

movement and by extension all citizens of these two regions of the country. People are labelled as Ambazonians when they are perceived to not support the government in Yaounde or when they advocate for the official recognition of a separate state. Amba Boys refers to separatist combatants.

**Proper use:** It is okay to say Anglophone separatists, but it is wrong to generalize and use the label for all Anglophone Cameroonians because not all of them support the separatist movement. Ambazozo is derogatory and should not be used.

## Tontinards & Sardinards

**Origin:** The Cameroon political landscape was rocked during the October 2018 presidential election. One of the post-electoral outcomes were the heightened tensions between the Bamileke and the Beti, perhaps because the two top candidates were from the two ethnic blocs – Paul Biya (a Beti) for the ruling Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) and Maurice Kamto (a Bamileke) for the Cameroon Renaissance Movement (MRC). The Bamileke began to mock the Beti as Les Sardinards and the Beti called the Bamileke Les Tontinards.

**Meaning and use:** Both tontinard and sardinard are coined from existing words, adding “ard” to denote “those noted for.” Tontine is the word for thrift and loans often done within social or socio-cultural groups, especially within tribal associations. The Beti and other critics of the Bamileke imply that the Bamileke are too preoccupied with saving money and deny themselves the comfort they could afford, seeing them as stingy and overly frugal. On the other hand, Sardine is a kind of ready-to-eat tinned fish. During the election campaigns, sardine tins with bread were often handed out at campaign events and party supporters were seen on video scrambling to hungrily collect and eat the sardines. Thus, to the Bamileke, the Beti sold their conscience and were able to be easily bought with only a little fish as a payment. Thus the Beti are mocked as being sardinard.

**Proper use:** Both words are mocking and meant to demean. Avoid using and instead describe specific actions you agree or disagree with among the parties.

## Les Kamtalibans

**Origin:** Kamtaliban is a combination of Kamto and Taliban. The term is used to describe supporters of Maurice Kamto, leader of the opposition Cameroon Renaissance Movement (MRC). Kamto was declared runner-up in the 2018 presidential election against

President Paul Biya, but Kamto claims he won and that his victory was stolen. Protests by him and his supporters plunged the country into a post-election crisis and Kamto was held in detention for eight months. His supporters have continued to organize protests in Cameroon and abroad (most of which are banned by the government). His supporters abroad, called BAS (Brigade Anti-Sardinard), have also continued to demonstrate. Due to the determination of their protests and the violent turn of some of their protests abroad, they have been likened to the Taliban in Afghanistan. Kamto has denied any link to the BAS.

**Meaning and use:** Using the term kamtaliban implies that Kamto supporters are as violent as the Taliban and is a generalization that should be avoided. It also unfairly connects Kamto's name with the Taliban.

**Proper use:** If you mean to say MRC supporters have acted violently or that the protests have turned violent, say so using the term MRC and the people themselves. Do not use the term kamtaliban.

## La meute

**Origin:** The origin of La meute is similar to that of Kamtalibans. It came into use with the rise of Kamto and his supporters.

**Meaning and use:** La meute means "a pack of hunting dogs" and suggests that supporters of Maurice Kamto are wild and fierce, like hunting dogs.

**Proper use:** Do not use this. If you mean to say Kamto's supporters are being aggressive, use that adjective. But rather than generalize all supporters, be specific in your descriptions.

## Moutons

**Origin:** Mouton is French for sheep and this term is then used to label the Sudano-Sahelian people of the three northern regions (Adamawa, North and the Far North). The term comes from the fact that the primary livelihood in the region is sheep rearing.

**Meaning and use:** The term is used to imply that the people are malleable and easily misled, as sheep are, by political forces. It is a way of calling people ignorant or simple.

**Proper use:** Do not use terms that group everyone together or compare humans to animals. Simply call them Northerners or Nordiste in French or if you are speaking of an individual, use their name.

## Kirdi

**Origin:** Kirdi is the word for "impure" in a local language spoken in northern Cameroon.

**Meaning and use:** This term is used to refer to the indigenous non-Muslim populations of northern Cameroon by the Muslim majority, who view non-Muslims as impure. Rather than rebuff the appellation, those stigmatized have embraced it and created a movement they call Kirditude. Their ideology is based on the history of the region and a rhetoric of victimization in order to build resilience and formulate political claims.

**Proper use:** Words such as pure or impure are not appropriate labels for people and using this term only heightens tensions. Simply call this segment of the population non-Muslim northerners.

## Kaado

**Origin:** Kaado is a term similar to the term Kirdi and also means impure.

**Meaning and use:** It is also a way to degrade people based on their religious affiliations.

**Proper use:** Do not use the term. Instead, call them non-Muslim northerners.

## Wari-wari

**Origin:** The Kanuri are a group that straddles the border in the Far North Region of Cameroon and Nigeria. Their current home base is in Maiduguri, Borno State in Nigeria, which is also the base of Boko Haram. For this reason, the Kanuri are often associated with Boko Haram.

**Meaning and use:** The term wari-warū means "coming and going" in the Fulani language. It is used to discriminate against internally displaced people of the Kanuri ethnic group who flee from areas affected by the Boko Haram crisis. The receiving communities consider the internally displaced people to be invaders or indirectly associated with Boko Haram.

**Proper use:** Using a term to disparage internally displaced people is not acceptable. Simply call them by their tribe, group, or their actual name and if needed, refer to them as an internally displaced person.



## Wadjo

**Origin:** Wadjo is a term used to negatively speak of the indigenous people of North America. It contains wrong assumptions about how they lived, implying they lived almost naked and led primitive lives, which is incorrect. In fact, the Iroquois Confederacy, a collection of tribes of North America, was founded in 1142 and is the oldest living participatory democracy on earth.

Wadjo came into use in Cameroon in the 1990s and was used by young people to refer to people of northern Cameroon. In recent times, this connotation has undergone a shift. With the advent of Boko Haram, the term Wadjo is no longer used only for the people of the northern regions, but is used to label anyone seen as a terrorist, rebel, or person seeking to destabilize Cameroon.

**Meaning and use:** The term Wadjo emerged as a synonym for northerner and is now used more broadly, always with a negative connotation.

**Proper use:** Do not use this term. Simply call people northerners or Muslims, if they are.

## Gadamaayo

**Origin:** Gadamaayo is an old term that means the one on the other side of the shore.

**Meaning and use:** Northerners use this term as a discriminatory word to describe southerners. Gadamaayo is like a hit back at southerners for referring to northerners as Wadjo. This term refers to particular ways of behaving, acting, and thinking, as well as specific language and clothing.

**Proper use:** Avoid these terms that characterize all people of a group. Simply say someone is from the south or describe an individual and their traits in particular.

## Guiziga, Voleurs de chèvre

**Origin:** Voleurs de chèvre means "goat thief" and is a term used to designate a person of the Guiziga ethnic group in northern Cameroon.

**Meaning and use:** Using this term is offensive because it expresses a strong prejudice against the Guiziga people, implying all of them are thieves. The name of the ethnic group, Guiziga, is also used to substitute for the word thief, which is greatly unfair.

**Proper use:** Do not use the tribal name to imply thievery, only use it to say that someone is indeed

of that tribe. And call a thief a thief. Do not make connections between someone's tribe and their personal behavior.

## Midin houwoum, Sumsa djo'ona

**Origin:** Among the Musgum and the Massa tribes of the Logone plain in Far North Cameroon, Midin houwoum and Sumsa djo'ona are used to designate people suspected of collusion with Boko Haram terrorists, who are active in the mountain range along the Cameroon-Nigerian border.

**Meaning and use:** Sumsa djo'ona means mountain people and is a derogatory reference to mountain dwellers and implied connections with terrorism.

**Proper use:** Do not use this term. Simply use neutral language.

## Les pédés, les bilingues, les ndepsos

**Origin:** Etymologically, the word comes from the Greek pederast that was used to refer to the sexual and mentoring relationship between a higher class male and a young boy in ancient Greece, which was a practice that every male of higher standing engaged in – although it is highly problematic by today's standards since the sexualization of children is wrong. But this shows how our sense of childhood and the need to protect children has thankfully evolved over the past 2500 years.

The term pederast began to be used again much later in Europe, but took on a different meaning and was used as a term to mean anyone who was homosexual. The diminutive pédé appeared around 1836, followed by its feminization pédale around 1935, pédoque in 1953 and pédoque in 1972. In the late 1990s, the usages evolved into another form of jargon: ndep or ndepso to mean homosexual.

**Meaning and use:** In Cameroon, pédé is used to refer to men considered too effeminate or who do not meet the standards of traditional masculinity and also refers to all men who engage in homosexual relations. There is a strong anti-LGBTQ+ sentiment that is often expressed with phrases such as "we're not gay" or "it's not a gay thing." The closeness of pédé to the term pedophile, which is the designating for sexual attraction of an adult towards a pre-pubescent child, regardless of whether that child is of the same or different sex, makes all of these terms highly problematic and stigmatizes people. The term bilingual refers mainly to bisexuals who generally had to lead a double life in Cameroon since

homosexuality is illegal and still punishable with fines and imprisonment. Thus people often have to marry a person of the opposite sex, yet in secret, they have a partner of the same sex. This forced way of life is described as bilingualism, that is, dual languages.

**Proper use:** All of these terms imply that there is something wrong if a person is attracted to the same sex, which is incorrect and unkind and stigmatizes them. However, given the laws of Cameroon, it is also dangerous to make assumptions or call someone by any of these terms, since there can be consequences as serious as prison. So the safest route is to not discuss other people's sexuality, regardless of whether they are hetero- or homosexual in nature. Nobody's sex life should be a topic of discussion or mockery. If you do however discuss someone, use the terms gay (originally only used for men, but it is today used for both men and women), lesbian (only used for women), bisexual (used for men or women), etc. These are non-offensive terms.

## Eboa, Kotto Bass

**Origin:** Eboa Lotin was a Cameroonian musician who died in 1997 after an impressive career. He won several awards and endeared himself as a talented musician across Africa. Eboa had a physical disability that affected his right leg, which left him limping. As the musician became more and more popular, his name inevitably became associated with his physical disability. Similarly, Kotto Bass also has a physical disability, much like his mentor Eboa Lotin, of the leg that forced him to have to use a stick to ease his movements. He also was a talented and experienced musician. When he died in 1996, folks began using his name as a mockery for other people with physical disabilities, especially those affecting the leg.

**Meaning and use:** Both terms are used as shorthand for people with physical disabilities affecting legs. The use of these terms is so common that people do not even realize how pejorative the expression is. Sentences such as "Please, I'm looking for one Eboa who often passes by here" or "The new teacher is a Kotto Bass" are common. The term is both demeaning for the musicians, whose names are being associated not with their work or talent, but with a disability that they were not responsible for. And it stigmatizes all other people with disabilities and reduces their entire personhood to only what is disabled, focusing on the negative.

**Proper use:** People have complex identities and should not be reduced to one trait, especially when that is a negative trait such as a disability. Do not use these terms. Simply refer to people by their names

and if needed, you can add that they have a physical disability. In general, do not say someone is disabled, because this makes the disability the center of their identity. Instead, say that they have a disability, which makes it just one of many markers that define them.

## Nges Man

**Origin:** In the mid-2000s, the rise in access to the internet led to a rise in internet scamming in Cameroon. Many young people, especially boys, indulged in online scamming, robbing unsuspecting foreigners of huge sums of money. These people then took to a life of excessive spending and began to be called nges men. The more that the rest of society began to understand the source of this wealth and the internet scamming that continued to support it, nges man became a term to describe any immoral, unorthodox, or unacceptable way of acquiring wealth. Over time, it also became a term to describe anybody who earns a living through the internet, irrespective of the integrity of their activities.

**Meaning and use:** In local parlance, nges is the word for jewelry. Nges man came about because scammers displayed their newfound wealth with layers of expensive jewelry (rings, chains, watches, etc.).

**Proper use:** Though there were and are many people who use the internet for criminal purposes, calling every internet entrepreneur or employee a nges man is unfair because it generalizes and stigmatizes work. So avoid the term and simply call internet workers by their professional titles and for those that make their living scamming people, call them scammers.

# Facilitator Notes

# Organizing a Training

Planning your Session  
Training Basics  
Facilitating the Session  
Introduction Session  
During the Session  
Closing the Session  
Self-Reflection



# ► Organizing a Training

The successful delivery of workshops relies on adequate preparation, good facilitation skills, and a commitment to support people's learning and development. This guide includes techniques, tips, and activities to help you.

## Planning your Session

### Selecting a Focus

As a trainer/facilitator, think through the following questions:

- Decide what the main focus of the training will be. What is the one thing you want them to learn? Your focus should be specific. A good measure of whether you have clarified your goal is to see if you can clearly and simply state the purpose of the training in one short sentence.
- Once you have the goal written out:
  - What can you do to make sure the training succeeds in meeting this goal?
  - Can you already guess what problems might arise and try to solve them ahead of time?
  - What related topics should you prepare to talk about?
  - Are there rules you need to set up ahead of time to ensure things don't get off schedule?

### Sending Reminders

- Send out a clear agenda to participants about five days before the training that includes all relevant information:
  - Give clear directions to the place where the training will take place.
  - The exact time when the training will start and how long the training will take.
- Tell participants if there are any special requirements needed to participate, such as a basic understanding of English or a certain level of computer literacy.
- Send another reminder to participants about the training two days before the workshop.

### Preparing the Content

- For the training to be successful, you must be very familiar with the content you will be teaching. We can only teach what we know.
- Review the main goal of the session again, as discussed above.
- Then using this focus, create a lesson plan for the training.

- Be specific about what will be covered and at what time of the day.
- Before the training, it helps to practice explaining concepts to friends and family. The more often you work on explaining something, the easier it becomes.
- Think through what questions participants might have and try to come up with answers.
- Think about what content participants might find confusing and come up with three different ways to explain it.
- If possible, try to determine what knowledge and skill levels the participants are at to adjust your teaching to their needs and abilities.
- Make sure you are up to date on the subject and any new and relevant information.

### Materials Needed

- Are there any resources or materials you need for the session? Gather them now, such as the Field Guide or other materials you want to use during the training.
- What materials will the participants need? Paper? Pens? Anything printed out?

### Logistics of the session

- Keep your stated goal for the session in mind when thinking about how to organize the session. If there is only one thing participants could learn and walk away with, what would it be?
- How much time do you have and need? Keep in mind that exercises always take longer than expected.
- What kind of space or equipment is available to you?
- How many participants will there be? Make a plan to adapt the training if more people than expected or fewer than expected are there.
- What kind of teaching style best suits your topic and audience? Use a combination of different forms. Here are some options:

**Lectures** are ideal for introducing a topic. Keep lectures to 30 minutes or less and be sure to follow it with something more interactive. When giving a lecture, summarize the important points at the beginning and the end.

**Discussions** are helpful after a lecture. Have open-ended questions ready to help prompt a discussion. An open-ended question doesn't have a right



yes/no answer but instead allows for reflection.

Examples of open-ended questions:

- How could you apply what you learned in your community?
- What aspect of the topic is most challenging to understand?
- How do you think we could change the way people interact online?

**Demonstrations** work best when you need to show the steps in how to do something hands-on. It is usually a good idea to demonstrate the steps in front of the group and then let each learner try to do it themselves. This way, they will right away find out if they can replicate what you demonstrated or if there are areas they need help understanding.

**Online learning** is helpful when trainees need to gain practical experience of IT skills, if they need to access video or audio material, or if self-testing activities (such as quizzes) would be helpful.

**Roleplay** involves acting out a new skill in a pretend environment and learning from the feedback from other participants.

**Group work** is a good idea if there are a lot of participants so that you can break the large group into smaller groups. This way, they can interact more and have an easier time discussing and asking questions.

**Case studies** can help learners put new information into context. As they process the information and relate it to a relevant situation, they create mental connections that will help them recall the information later.

- At the end of the training, briefly summarize (in less than 5 minutes) what material you have covered and what the participants have gained in skills.

## Training Basics

### Understand Your Role as Facilitator

The facilitator plays a vital role in the learning experience. One of the most important things a facilitator can do is create a safe and supportive environment for participants. Participants need to feel comfortable to ask questions (even very simple ones) and need to know that they can speak up, even if they are not sure their answers are correct.

### Setting the Tone

People learn more effectively in a supportive, friendly environment. Everything from attitude, choice of words, facial expressions, and tone of voice can influence the training. Leave whatever is weighing on your mind for the length of the training and focus on being positive and supportive.

### Engage Participants

It is essential to engage participants throughout the training. People learn more when they are engaged with the material. One way to increase engagement is by asking many questions and encouraging all participants to contribute.

### Manage the Training

As the facilitator, you are the manager of the training, and it is up to you to keep the training on schedule and under control. There may be difficult situations, difficult participants, and unexpected circumstances to deal with. It is your responsibility to keep control and manage the problem, whatever it may be.

### Manage Time

Participants typically enjoy group discussions and want to share their ideas and experiences. As a result, it is easy for discussions to take up too much time. It is essential to know when to stop a discussion of a topic and move on to the next part of the training. This can be done by simply stating that you need to stay on schedule and that participants can discuss further after the training has concluded.

### Please note:

- #defyhatenow trainers and presenters are not supposed to share political opinions regarding the current conflict.
- Participants are not supposed to engage in political debate or hurl insults. Your role as a trainer is to stop discussions if they turn towards the political.
- You have the right to stop anyone who diverges from the main topic.

# Facilitating the Session

## Checklist of things to have BEFORE the training starts:

- Attendance sheet
- Transport incentive sheet (if applicable)
- Feedback survey form
- Activity Reporting template
- Photos / videos (documentation / photographer, audio recorder)
- Projector (if applicable)
- Flipcharts and pens
- Translators (if applicable)
- Notetaker

Program (One day)	EXAMPLE ONLY
Time	Topic
08:30 - 09:00	Introduction to the training and goals (lecture)
9:00 - 10:00	Introduction to propaganda and fake news (lecture and small group discussions)
10:00 - 11:00	Discussion of hate speech mitigation on social media (group work)
11:00 - 11:30	Tea Break
11:30 - 13:00	Social media platforms: Twitter, FB Instagram, Youtube (demonstrations, group work)
13:00 - 14:00	Lunch Break
14:00 - 14:30	How to create online campaigns (lecture)
14:30 - 15:30	Challenges and insights to facilitate building a strong social media presence (discussion session)
15:30 - 15:45	Break
15:45 - 17:00	Tools for managing your online presence (lecture, demonstration, group work)
17:00 - 17:30	Feedback and way forward

## Introduction Session

### Do a check-in with your audience.

Once everybody is settled in, go around the room and complete the check-in. This is a chance for the participants to share their feelings and their excitement regarding the workshop. You should also take this time to set the scene and create the kind of atmosphere you want. Do you want it to feel calm, energetic, solemn, or light-hearted?

## Logistics

You will want to take a moment at the beginning of the workshop to set some ground rules and go over the logistics. Tell them where the bathrooms are. Go over rules, such as being respectful when others talk or not discussing politics.

## Go over the agenda

Walk through the agenda together with the participants. Remember to share the purpose and goal of the workshop so that they'll be able to recognize whether or not their discussions throughout the day will help you achieve the shared goal.

## During the Session

- Start from the simple and move to the complex, especially if you are introducing new ideas. Check if everyone understands and allow participants to ask questions before moving on to a new topic or your next key point.
- Allow time for questions, but also do not let questions and discussions throw off the schedule. Stick to your plan.
- At the end of each time slot, summarize the most important points.
- Use as simple language as possible. Clear ideas and language are best when teaching.

## Activities

- Give clear instructions for group work and other activities, including how much time they have for the activity.
- Explain why you are doing the activity and what you hope they will gain from it.
- If feedback and sharing from the activity are needed, be very clear about what you want to know and how the group will share at the start. For example, "At the end, one person from each group should share their three main learning points. They will have a one-minute maximum to share this with the group."

## 3-2-1 Feedback Session

Schedule time for a feedback session at the end of every training day. Each participant is given a paper in which they are asked to write:

- **Three** things they learned
- **Two** things they will make use of in their work or life
- **One** question they still have

Collect this feedback and read it over to see what could be reviewed the next day to help clarify questions. If it is a one-day session, use this feedback to learn what went well and what to change next time to improve the training.

## Closing the Session

- Summarize what you hope everyone learned, what skills they gained, and briefly discuss how they can apply what they learned in their everyday life.
- Ask the group to reflect and share what they found most useful.
- Thank everyone for coming. Explain any next steps, if applicable.

## Self-Reflection

After the training is over, review the feedback and your ideas of how the training went. Did you achieve the goal you set at the beginning? If yes, write down what you felt helped you succeed. Was it one particular session? Was it the format of how something was presented? Was there a key moment? And if you did not achieve the goal, review the training and find what went wrong. Was the goal unrealistic? Was the training not planned out well enough? Were you lacking certain materials? Did you use too many lectures? What could you change next time to be more successful?

### CHECKLIST

At the end of the training, collect all the following and share them with the team:

- Completed attendance sheet with signatures
- Completed transport incentive sheet (if applicable)
- Completed feedback survey forms
- Completed Activity Reporting template
- Photos and/or videos
- Any notes on flip charts or post-its (photographed and transcribed)
- Group discussion notes collected
- Audio feedback from participants

# Credits

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to #defyhatenow with ideas, time, positive energy, and creative collaborations that have linked peacebuilding action on the ground in Cameroon, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda, and Kenya with online communities worldwide.

#defyhatenow dedicates this Field Guide to the citizens of Cameroon, who are working together to create a more peaceful society.

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**Keep spreading peace,  
every day of the year!**

Be actively engaged in the work of spreading peace on a daily basis in your own life.  
Work to find peace in your heart, mind and body.  
Seek professional help to overcome trauma.  
Remember that every day you have the chance to choose peace and promote understanding, compassion, and reconciliation through your way of communicating and interacting with others.

**Thank you for your contribution  
to making the world  
a more peaceful place.**

**#HateFreeCameroon #defyhatenow #Art4Peace  
#PenNotGun #EndAnglophoneCrisis #WeStand4Peace  
#SheBuildsPeace**

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*Photo by Hakim George Hegily*