

Initiatives to fight misinformation, provide access to reliable information launched

With South Africa preparing for its seventh democratic election, set for 29 May, combatting misinformation and ensuring users have access to information from reliable sources to safeguard the integrity of the electoral process is imperative.



Image supplied. TikTok has announced several initiatives with the local electoral commission and civil society organisations to combat misinformation

TikTok has announced several initiatives in this regard with the local electoral commission and civil society organisations.

In-App Election Centre

In partnership with the Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC) and civil society organisations, TikTok's in-app Election Centre represents a pivotal step towards safeguarding the integrity of the electoral process.

Through this dedicated in-app centre available in local languages such as isiZulu, Afrikaans, Sesotho, Setswana and English, users will gain access to a wealth of information from reliable sources.

Commenting on the partnership, Fortune Mgwili-Sibanda, TikTok's public policy and government relations director says, "Our in-app election centre has authoritative information about the South African elections from the IEC.

"To maximise the visibility and accessibility of our in-app centre, we have implemented labels on content associated with the 2024 general elections.

These labels also serve as direct links to the centre, enabling viewers to access comprehensive information about the elections with a simple click.

Additionally, we will facilitate access to popular election hashtags, ensuring that users searching for related content can effortlessly find and engage with relevant information."

He adds: "Protecting the integrity of our platform, particularly around elections, is a responsibility we take seriously. We're proud to be a place that brings people together, and we work hard to keep harmful misinformation off our platform."

Sy Mamabolo, chief electoral officer of the Electoral Commission, says, "The burgeoning use of digital media in recent years has seen a corresponding surge in digital disinformation, particularly on social media platforms. Electoral processes have not been spared.

"Left unchecked, this phenomenon stands to undermine the conduct of credible elections. We applaud TikTok for its efforts in educating the TikTok community, combating the potential spread of harmful misinformation."

He also welcomed the steps TikTok has taken to create a page for useful authenticated educational information about these elections.

Factual Information and positive information are key to defending citizens from the scourge of disinformation, misinformation and malformation.



#SAelections24: Media accreditation for all Results Operation Centres

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Policy against paid political ads

TikTok also has a long-standing policy of not allowing paid political advertising, and accounts belonging to politicians or political parties are not able to advertise or make money on TikTok.

Investing in media literacy

To further strengthen its mission, TikTok has joined forces with Africa Check for a media literacy campaign in the lead-up to and during the South African elections.

Notably, this collaboration introduces a groundbreaking first for the platform - the inclusion of sign language.

This innovative initiative aims to combat harmful misinformation and promote critical thinking among users.

Local creators have contributed educational videos in English, Afrikaans, isiZulu, isiXhosa, and sign language, accompanied by English subtitles, ensuring accessibility and engagement across diverse communities.

These videos will provide community members with the tools they need to become more savvy digital citizens, empowering them to engage meaningfully in the democratic process while simultaneously promoting creativity, safety and civility.

Sarah Lubala, info finder & media literacy editor, Africa Check says, "Media literacy provides individuals with the critical thinking skills needed to distinguish credible information from misinformation and disinformation, enabling informed voting

decisions.

She adds that partnering with TikTok on this to equip South Africans with the skills necessary to navigate today's complex media landscape effectively. Through collaborative efforts like these, we aim to create a more informed and engaged electorate, ensuring the thriving of democracy in our country."

“ *Digital disinformation is a threat to democracy. It occurs when someone deliberately creates and spreads lies about our elections. If you spot false or misleading election content, report it to the social media platform where you found it.* [#SAelections24](#) [#FakeNews](#) [#Elections](#) pic.twitter.com/P9E7P0XAHQ— IEC South Africa (@IECSouthAfrica) [April 24, 2024](#) ”

Code for Africa

Additionally, through a multifaceted approach, the app has collaborated with 18 global fact-checking partners to evaluate the accuracy of content across over 50 languages.

In South Africa, the partner is Code for Africa.

These partners assess whether a claim is true, false, or unsubstantiated so that moderators can take the right action based on TikTok's Community Guidelines.

They also share intelligence that helps us detect harmful misinformation and anticipate potential misinformation spreading on TikTok and on other platforms.

#TikTok4Peace initiative

Understanding that online safety remains a collaborative effort, Mgwili-Sibanda continues, “We are actively engaged in conducting safety workshops with Government, NGOs and vulnerable groups, to promote the need for safer online engagements. Additionally, TikTok is committed to encouraging peace, as evidenced by our #TikTok4Peace initiative. Under #TikTok4Peace, we aim to spread the message of peace in South Africa, particularly during this critical period.

“As part of this initiative, TikTok will launch a LIVE series under this banner in partnership with various creators and stakeholders, to promote open dialogues that encourage users to respect the views of others.”

These initiatives are just one part of a wider strategy to ensure that TikTok remains a creative, safe, and civil place for our community during the election period.



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Access to credible information

Recognised as an entertainment platform, TikTok continues to make efforts to ensure users have access to credible information by enforcing rigorous measures to combat and remove harmful misinformation on the platform.

Through partnerships with experts and authorities, the platform recognises this shared responsibility and actively addresses emerging threats, playing a pivotal role in safeguarding the integrity of elections globally.

By fostering an environment where users can engage with content responsibly, TikTok aims to promote transparency, authenticity, and civic engagement as the South African electorate prepares to cast their votes.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>