

“KETE TENE: LITTLE RUMOURS”

**GENDER,
DISINFORMATION
AND INSECURITY
IN THE CENTRAL
AFRICAN REPUBLIC**



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Gender, disinformation and insecurity in the Central African Republic

JULY 2026

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The project is based on the principle that, by encouraging the meaningful and safe participation of young people in political processes, they can develop a more positive outlook and coping mechanisms while reducing their vulnerability to political manipulation and violent tools of expression. To this end, the project supports young women and men to run for leadership positions in youth groups, administrative bodies and political institutions, and helps young people to develop a fact-checking platform to verify information and counter narratives that facilitate hatred or mis- and disinformation between themselves, politicians and their wider communities.

The contents of the publication are the sole responsibility of Conciliation Resources and the views expressed do not necessarily reflect the position of the Peacebuilding Fund.



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INTRODUCTION

The Central African Republic (CAR) is undergoing a period of increased tensions between citizens and politicians, a fragile civic space, rising digital connectivity and the growing exploitation of information.

In this context, young people – who represent the country's main demographic – occupy a challenging position: they are both central actors in CAR's transition to peace and primary targets of mis- and disinformation by political figures, armed groups and foreign actors.

The late 2025 elections provided a critical opportunity to strengthen inclusive democracy and reconciliation but instead led to confusion and frustration among many young people. Political discourse circulated in a fragmented information environment, with competing messages targeting young people shared on radio stations, social networks, by local authorities and in community conversations. This plurality of sources led to information which was often inaccurate, selective and skewed, and reinforced fear and mistrust between young people, the government and their communities – particularly in areas which have experienced ongoing armed conflict. Our consultations suggest that young people might be more inclined to turn to violence as a tool to express their political resentment and grievances arising from this lack of civic space.

The elections also drew attention to the use of gendered mis and dis-information, with reports of political actors pressuring young women to spread certain narratives, appealing to specific forms of masculinity to influence the political support of young men, and young female candidates being discredited through online narratives.

Research objectives

This research sets out to understand how young men and women are vulnerable to and impacted differently by mis- and disinformation, the types of content they are targeted with and how this shapes their political and civic engagement as well as wider community security. It aims to support the project's goal of enabling young men and women to verify, debunk and offer counter narratives to mis- and disinformation that may stand in the way of their full and meaningful political and civic participation, while generating insights that can guide future policy and programming on combatting gendered mis- and disinformation in the CAR and beyond.

There is growing recognition among donors and policymakers of the risks of mis- and disinformation. The UN Global Risk Report (2024) highlights mis- and disinformation as a top global threat which many countries are not prepared to address, while there have been reports of disinformation exacerbating tensions during key political moments, affecting UN Peacekeeping Operations in contexts such as CAR.¹ The UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression has warned that gendered disinformation is on the rise across the world, posing a direct threat to democracies, democratic values and democratic participation.² However, there are also gaps in understanding – particularly when it comes to the links between men and mis- and disinformation and mis- and disinformation and peacebuilding, which this report aims to further explore.

Recommendations

Mis- and disinformation is a social phenomenon rooted in identity and power relations. Peacebuilding interventions need to question gender and conflict norms which shape how information is received, circulated and acted upon. Our research puts forward five recommendations for tackling mis- and disinformation:

1. Challenge harmful narratives and build trust at multiple layers of society
2. Design interventions that respond to the manipulation of gender roles and misogyny
3. Unpack narratives of fear linked to the history of conflict
4. Build on emerging forms of civic masculinity
5. Strengthen gender sensitive digital literacy skills and mechanisms.

WHAT IS MIS- AND DISINFORMATION AND HOW DOES IT IMPACT MEN AND WOMEN?

Misinformation refers to information which is unintentionally false, inaccurate or misleading, whereas disinformation means information has been deliberately fabricated or manipulated to deceive audiences. Identifying the intention behind the sharing of information can be challenging. Both mis- and disinformation have a direct impact on peace and security as they can create divisions, undermine trust and stoke violence.³

Gendered disinformation refers to the intentional production and dissemination of false or misleading content which capitalises on gender stereotypes to attack or elicit responses from specific people. It has emerged as a byproduct of broader authoritarian movements that weaponise gender issues to rally conservative constituencies, exacerbate polarising topics and mobilise anxieties about social and political change.⁴

Gendered disinformation can be used to exclude women, gender and sexual minorities and men from positions of power. For example, female politicians, journalists and civil society leaders across the world have been exposed to 'doxing' (the sharing of personal identifying information online), hacking, hate speech, 'deep fake' sexual images, 'sextortion' (threats to share intimate pictures) and misogynistic trolling designed to undermine, shame and control them. Recent reports have also found that digitally manipulated Artificial Intelligence (AI) images have been used to discredit male leaders by drawing on cultural stigmas around gender and sexuality (for example, by portraying them engaging in same-sex activity or wearing women's clothing). Those targeted often experience an impossible choice between silence or continued exposure to abuse.⁵

Gendered disinformation can also be used as an appeal to men. For example, the 'digital masculinity crisis'⁶ refers to how online environments are offering solutions to some men's perceived grievances regarding their loss of status in society. Such spaces promote false narratives, often framing women as oppressors and offering violent solutions to men's disenfranchisement.⁷

As the overarching objective of gendered disinformation is to shape perceptions towards gender and the role of women in society and reinforce patriarchal structures, it is highly contextualized. It uses emotive content, tailored to local contexts, and takes advantage of 'flash points' such as elections to achieve greater influence.⁸

Methodology

In November 2025, shortly before the official electoral campaign in CAR began, Conciliation Resources together with a team of Bangui-based researchers carried out interviews and focus groups with 84 young men and women, community leaders, local authorities, political figures, elders and religious actors. Variables such as gender, age, social status and geographical location were analysed to highlight patterns and significant differences across areas.

The research focused on three contrasting but complementary contexts: Bangui, the country's political and media capital, and Sibut and Kaga Bandoro, cities in the north-central axis, marked by strong memories of conflict and the influential role of local, religious and community authorities. These sites provided insight into both the urban dynamics of strong informational connectivity and the realities of transit towns where rumours, security and moral authority play a central role in the circulation of information.

In partnership with Build Up (a digital peacebuilding organisation), the team also used Phoenix, its open-source platform designed for peacebuilders to conduct ethical and participatory social media listening. This tracked the portrayal of male, female and young political candidates on specific social media accounts (for example, linked to high-profile newspapers and websites, journalists and political leaders). While there were some limitations, such as only being able to track public accounts, this allowed for the triangulation of observations made in interviews and focus groups.

A validation workshop took place in Bangui in April 2026, bringing together 21 project partners and community members from Kaga Bandoro and Sibut to verify the research findings, draw out comparisons across the three locations and identify implications for future peacebuilding work.

KEY FINDINGS

1. Mis- and disinformation is driving insecurity in communities

Following years of armed violence, trust between communities and authorities in CAR remains fragile and memories of conflict are vivid.

Mis- and disinformation capitalises on people's sense of fear by providing immediate, actionable explanations in uncertain and complex situations. Rumours spread rapidly when official information is slow to be confirmed or denied, commonly circulating in neighbourhoods, markets and places of worship. Examples identified highlight that mis- and disinformation are context-specific.

For example, Kaga Bandoro remains associated with episodes of armed violence, forced displacement and community breakdown. Information there operates in a restricted but emotionally charged environment. Disinformation can exploit this by circulating false alarms and unverified reports of armed movements or inter-community tensions. People shared examples of taxi moto drivers spreading false rumours that the *Séléka* and armed factions from the *Dekoa axis* were in town and planning to attack and burn down houses, resulting in people fleeing. Likewise, rumours that armed groups were planning specific attacks during the elections resulted in Russian African Corps (former Wagner) forces occupying the *Parc des Boeufs*, creating a major source of anxiety for communities. In another example, photos were published of a man supposedly arrested by the government. However, it was later determined that the background showed green grass which should not have been the case in the dry season. The photo ended up being of an M23 leader in the DRC, but had been used to stoke fear among communities in CAR. In another case, a rumour that a former Muslim prefect was sent to attack communities on the *Grevaï axes* resulted in people destroying his house and MINUSCA intervening to protect him.

Sibut, on the other hand, is a transit town traversed by human, economic and information flows that fuel a constant perception of high alert and vulnerability. Information there is mainly used as a warning tool, with residents primarily interested in understanding what could affect their immediate safety and movements. Disinformation narratives are often interpreted as attempts to anticipate or protect against a potential risk, which makes them difficult to challenge. Participants shared examples of rumours that the *Séléka* were trying to capture the Community Chief, which resulted in him fleeing and his whereabouts remaining unknown, or young people fearing voting for Muslim candidates as they had been told the *Séléka* would come back to take power and turn the CAR into an 'Islamic republic'.

“Every year during the elections, the same rumour comes up that armed groups are going to attack the town. People panic, stock food and salt, and parents refuse to send their children to the Independence Day parade”

Research participant

In Bangui, young people are exposed to a rapid, often competitive, circulation of political, security and social narratives. National and community radio stations, social media, international news channels and word of mouth coexist. This 'information overload' can heighten sensitivity to rumours, with mis- and disinformation seemingly used to stoke tensions between young people and authorities. Examples include rumours that political parties wanted to divide the 7th Arrondissement (a residential district located along the Ubangi river) and misinformation that the President used his supernatural powers to create the electrical fault at the *Lycée Boganda*, which resulted in a fire killing dozens of high school students and led to young people revolting.

These examples of mis- and disinformation have a profound effect on community security, creating a climate of uncertainty that often prompts rapid reactions. Women and children commonly flee in response to false alarms of armed group activity, with their homes sometimes then ransacked. In other cases – especially during 'peak' moments for mis- and disinformation such as the Presidential elections – parents are reluctant to send their children to school. Some people reported fleeing to neighbouring countries, struggling to regain access to their homes on their return.

It is also apparent that the line between mis- and disinformation can be hard to separate. For example, seemingly well-intentioned rumours around armed group activity can quickly become misconstrued to create fear and incite violence. Young people provided examples of their peers going into the bush to self-train themselves like the *Anti-balaka* in preparation for anticipated threats, while rumours that ex-combatants who return their weapons face jail have encouraged many young ex-combatants to hold onto them.

“Some people always want a community to be destabilised – they spread rumours to keep people on alert at all times”

Validation workshop participant

HOW IS INFORMATION SHARED IN CAR AND WHAT SOURCES ARE TRUSTED?

As home to political power, national media, civil society and a high concentration of young people in insecure economic situations, Bangui serves as a 'laboratory' for mis- and disinformation: what circulates there is quickly amplified or reinterpreted in neighbourhoods and beyond the capital. Young people in Bangui reported heavy exposure to social media, but also mistrust of Facebook and WhatsApp which are recognised as major vectors of false information and polarising discourse. Influencer groups, such as Corbeaux News Centrafrique (CNC) and 236 Magazine, commonly share misinformation of a political nature among thousands of subscribers. Leading information sources in Bangui are social media, the radio (Radio Centrafrique, Guira FM, Radio Ndeke Luka, Voix du peuple and Voix de l'évangile), television (France 24, Africa 24, Centrafrique and Al Jazeera), hearsay, political leaders and newspapers.

Nevertheless, the speed of mis- and disinformation in Bangui also facilitates people's ability to verify and debunk narratives. Consortium partner Médias, Démocratie et Développement Durable (M3D), for example, supports communities to compare content across different sources of information, use fact-checking tools such as Google Image search, Yandex and InVID, contact publishers to scrutinise the reliability of information and obtain hard proof to support or debunk mis- and disinformation.

In Kaga Bandoro, the research identified common information sources as being the radio (Radio Kaga, Guira FM, La voix de Kaga and Radio Lengo Sango), community meetings, youth associations and WhatsApp groups, the church, television and word of mouth. Young people tend to share information in social gatherings, such as cinema halls, in front of shops and over food and drink. Social media is widely recognised as a platform where information is distorted and 'imposter' profiles are common.

In Sibut, leading information sources are the radio (Ndékè-Luka, Guira FM and RFI), non-governmental organisations, community and religious leaders. People reported verifying information with community leaders, mayors, governors and in community association meetings. Social media is present, but relies on a small number of people with access to the internet cascading information down. Its credibility was questioned by those interviewed, who frequently associate it with the circulation of false information.

Across all three contexts, radio stations (particularly national and community stations) remain the most credible sources, especially when they relay statements from authorities or security officials. However, this trust is conditional: it is based on the perceived ability of the media to correct or refute misinformation. When radio stations are slow to confirm or deny information, trust erodes and rumours take over and spread rapidly. *Bouche à oreille* (word of mouth) is also considered one of the most trusted sources of information (when two or three people say the same thing), alongside community chiefs who circulate information from the prefect mayors.

2. Young men and women are vulnerable to, and interact with, mis- and disinformation in different ways

Gender shapes a person's vulnerability to mis- and disinformation and how they interact with it.

In Kaga Bandoro and Sibut, communities largely live within an information 'vacuum', remote from the country's capital and centre of power. Young people there have limited access to newspapers or social media, with poor internet coverage and at times interrupted local radio broadcasts. Uneven education levels make it difficult to fully understand and debunk mis- and disinformation in the media, which is often circulated in French rather than Sango.

Within this context, young women are particularly vulnerable to mis- and disinformation, relying heavily on word of mouth and information shared by customers at markets and by taxi moto drivers. Communities noted

that few young women have access to smart phones to fact-check information (fearing being accused of being part of an armed group if they own one) and many are ashamed to verify information with authorities. Some women, such as young Muslim widows, were described as being 'caught in a dynamic of survival', primarily focusing on their immediate livelihood and security which limits their resources and capacity to critically engage with the information shared with them.

Young men, on the other hand, are often exposed to mis- and disinformation through their roles in trade and travelling long distances. While there were some reports of young men spreading disinformation in order to create panic and steal goods from communities, they are generally trusted in terms of the information they share. For example, people referenced young men correctly warning of a planned attack by a group of men on the *Axe Grimari*⁹ who ended up pillaging local communities. Information shared by young women, on the other hand, is more likely to be referred to as gossip or *kete tene* ('little rumours').

Young men also have comparatively more power when it comes to sharing or debunking mis- and disinformation: with higher access to smartphones, they are frequently trusted to cascade information within their communities. Nevertheless, they can still be vulnerable targets of disinformation: participants shared examples of doctored photographs depicting young politically active men naked or with genital mutilation being shared to shame them.

3. Gendered mis- and disinformation is shared by multiple actors, which makes it harder to challenge

The research found that multiple actors play a role in spreading gendered mis- and disinformation.

Older men and women were noted as a particularly active group in sharing disinformation around young female political candidates. Participants felt they may be less likely to fully read, check and question the sources of information received, instead validating them based on who has sent it to them. It was noted that it can be particularly difficult for older people to debunk AI-doctored images and videos of political candidates when they look and sound so realistic and are sometimes shared by journalists who bring perceived authority.

“AI can start a war in our context”

Research participant

Political actors also use narratives that appeal to specific forms of masculinity (such as authority and partisan loyalty) during election periods to both reinforce their own legitimacy as candidates and influence political support from young men. Participants noted instances of politicians pressuring women in the Presidential party to share disparaging information about opposition female candidates, and political figures giving money to young women and working with a close cohort of ‘insider’ civil society organisations (such as the Nation Consultative Council for the Youth) to spread biased information.

“If there are political meetings and marches, they [political figures] believe it’s easier to convince and manipulate women”

Validation workshop participant

The way that young people themselves use mis- and disinformation is also gendered. For example, participants noted that men in CAR tend to use disinformation more strategically than women. They shared examples of them using AI to project a favourable image of themselves and, in some political cases, debunk rumours of corruption. On the other hand, they felt that AI tends to be used against women (for example, to enhance or alter their physical appearance).

Taxi moto drivers are also considered a reliable source of information due to their contact with security forces and knowledge of armed group movements (an example was shared of taxi moto drivers correctly warning communities of gunfire during the President’s visit to Kaga Bando). Yet participants reported that they also share mis- and disinformation, commonly through audio messages stored to USB keys. This often has gendered impacts: for example, mis- and disinformation around impending threats can result in women and children fleeing their homes.

4. Disinformation exploits masculinity to further division and insecurity

Disinformation thrives when it reinforces socially valued masculine identities such as those linked to community protection and pride.

For example, ‘protective masculinity’ refers to the pressures many men face to ensure the safety of people and property, demonstrate community loyalty, display vigilance and anticipate and respond quickly in the event of a threat. It is particularly valued in contexts like CAR, which are marked by prolonged insecurity and memories of conflict. It also shapes the way threats are perceived, interpreted and acted upon. Disinformation narratives appeal to these pressures by circulating false security alerts, rumours about returning ex-combatants or imminent threats, and alarmist discourse about the country’s political future, designed to mobilise young men within self-defence groups to fight. The ability of such narratives to activate a sense of fear among men of not protecting their communities or failing in their social roles, even if illusory, makes them attractive regardless of their veracity.

Participants explained that when such security alerts are shared, village chiefs will typically call on men in communities to gather and develop a strategy to protect the village. This sometimes involves placing men at different lookout spots and sending ‘spies’ to seek out further information. Sometimes community elders reinforce expectations of protection among young men in particular, accusing them of behaving like a woman if they run away and fail to defend their communities.

“Fleeing is seen as showing your weakness – it will darken the image of your community in the face of potential threat”

Validation workshop participant

‘Provider masculinity’ refers to the importance of men having economic independence and capacity, distributing resources and taking care of their household and wider community. It is particularly valued in contexts of economic insecurity, and disinformation narratives

have frequently exploited this by promising access to resources, economic opportunities and material benefits. This can incentivise more men to engage with discourses which appear to offer immediate solutions in hardship, such as those used by armed groups.

Finally, 'performative masculinity' refers to public pride, visibility, influence and credibility. Disinformation thus finds fertile ground in male networks where social recognition, assertiveness and the ability to capture attention takes precedence over informational accuracy and caution. This can reinforce the propensity of young men, in particular, to re-circulate information without checking the source or sharing polarising narratives in order to gain legitimacy.

5. Gender and disinformation interact to shape the political priorities and participation of young men and women

Gender norms play a key role in shaping what is considered legitimate political and civic participation for men, the topics on which it is acceptable to express themselves and modes of engagement deemed appropriate. These expectations are then reinforced in mis- and disinformation narratives.

In urban areas like Bangui, participants explained that education, money, networks, public speaking, visibility and social recognition are key qualities expected of men. Because of this, young men are more likely to be politically active, with priority given to issues such as security, employment, partisan politics and curbing of 'immoral' behaviour such as drug use and banditry. Issues related to care, women's health, community dialogue and conflict prevention tend to be associated with vulnerability and at odds with dominant forms of masculinity, and are therefore deprioritised.

In Sibut and Kaga Bandoro, masculinity values above all responsibility, bravery, courage, restraint and social respectability. A legitimate man is one who provides for his family, behaves with dignity and contributes to maintaining social and community order. Young men therefore play a key role as guarantors of stability, and are active in civic engagement when it comes to carrying out informal surveillance, local mediation and participating in religious and community initiatives. Topics such as female genital mutilation, gender-based violence, women's education, conflict between women (especially around water sources) and care are typically seen as less relevant topics for men to engage with politically and more the domain of *mamans* ('mums') in the community.

These norms also limit young men's expression of more critical or assertive forms of civic and political engagement. Doubt or open criticism can be interpreted as signs of weakness or irresponsibility. In Sibut, misinformation narratives position the political engagement of young people as risky and closely

linked to witchcraft. This caution can translate into a withdrawal of young men from visible political spaces, particularly during election periods.

For young women, gender norms (for example, around respectability, obedience, family obligations and discretion) serve as a structural barrier to their political participation, and they are frequently judged by stricter moral criteria. Disinformation plays a central role in morally sanctioning women who transgress the expected norms. For example, narratives around non-married female political candidates position them as 'enforcing' their viewpoint onto men and other women, accuse them of having 'godfathers' who are helping them and argue that they have only reached their position due to political connections rather than merit. A particularly disturbing example was shared of a female candidate who had to leave the country following the circulation of a fake lewd photograph, resulting in her deciding to no longer run for office.

“People more likely to vote for a man with no educational background over an educated woman with less financial capacity”

Validation workshop participant

In the electoral context, this dynamic was amplified. Whereas male candidates were often described in terms of their ability to mobilise communities (for example, by financing activities and attracting crowds to social venues), their economic aptitudes and scientific and military strength, female candidates had their personal finances scrutinised and were frequently reminded of the responsibility afforded to them. One comment on a female political leader's social media page noted, *“Good evening, Madame the Mayor, we voted for you, it is you but you have to understand that this is a heavy responsibility. You need to react like men do”*. Communities also shared multiple examples of rumours designed to create fear and discourage women from standing in elections, such as male candidates killing each other.

Nevertheless, the research uncovered numerous examples of powerful women succeeding in leadership positions which are not as widely reflected in prominent information discourses, though these tend to relate to older (and therefore more respected) women. In Kaga Bandoro, female candidates have mobilised other women through income-generating activities and have defended young people in the case of lawful arrests. In Bangui, the 'Dame of Iron' – a local grandmother running for the municipal elections – is valued for her quick and effective responses to local conflict and bereavement. A group of female leaders also brought a case to court against the son of a Minister's Special Advisor who published a Facebook Live stream disparaging local women.



6. Mis- and disinformation can both build a sense of belonging and drive social polarisation

Importantly, mis- and disinformation creates polarisation between communities but also helps to avoid social dissonance. Efforts to tackle it therefore need to be carefully designed.

Examples were shared of disinformation designed to create tensions between communities and returning ex-combatants. Rumours framing young male ex-combatants as 'bad' are designed to stoke fear and command respect. Disinformation around female ex-combatants tends to stigmatise them (for example by claiming they have been sexually abused or are involved in sorcery), overlooking the complex roles they play within armed groups. It was also noted that disinformation has become a 'business', with some community members being paid to spread rumours which target others in the community (for example, as a form of revenge). Mis and dis-information also shapes local perceptions of international stakeholders in CAR: for example, some participants felt Western countries had introduced smartphones to create tensions among Africans, while Russian allies are highly trusted when it comes to debunking disinformation among young people and maintaining community security.

Yet at the same time, being part of narratives shared within a group (whether it be family, community, religious or political) can limit isolation and offer a sense of belonging. Indeed, studies have shown that humans are more inclined to share false information in seeking belonging, building a reputation and developing social consensus.¹⁰ Participants shared an example of a village chief saying that all tribes within the *maja* group came from the same ancestor. Although not true, this message brought a sense of unity among various tribes in Sibut, with participants referring to this as "disinformation being used for good purpose". Challenging such information can therefore be perceived as distancing oneself from a group, or even as a form of disloyalty. Furthermore, given the deep links between disinformation and gender norms, questioning information can sometimes be perceived as questioning one's own status or role, which constitutes a high social cost and risks exposing people to mockery and exclusion.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

This research has shown that mis- and disinformation is a social phenomenon rooted in identity and power relations, rather than simply an informational anomaly to be corrected. As long as interventions are limited to content moderation or fact-checking, without questioning gender and conflict norms which shape how information is received, circulated and acted upon, results will remain limited and fragile. The following recommendations are designed to support more effective and gender responsive approaches to tackling mis- and disinformation.

- 1. Challenge harmful narratives and build trust at multiple layers of society.** The research has shown that multiple actors are involved in generating, sharing and receiving mis- and disinformation and reproducing norms and expectations among young people: elders and communities legitimise, politicians instrumentalise, the media disseminates and peers and influencers sanction or reward. In such a system, interventions targeting a single actor or a single level of socialisation are likely to have limited effects. Peacebuilders are well placed to intervene at different levels and build trust among different groups to challenge harmful narratives. They could also work with political elites to demonstrate how disinformation does not serve their long-term interests and instead support them to increase the accuracy of information accessed by voting franchises in the run up to elections.
- 2. Design interventions that respond to the manipulation of gender roles and misogyny.** Many interventions are based on the assumption that mis- and disinformation are primarily cognitive challenges (for example, linked to lack of access to reliable information, verification skills or poor media literacy). While these skills are important, an integrated approach which examines how gender roles and misogyny are manipulated by different actors to sway public opinion and silence certain groups, and how fears are stoked around disruption of traditional gender norms, will help to build awareness and resilience among young people and their wider communities to such discourse.
- 3. Unpack narratives of fear linked to the history of conflict.** The research has shown that mis- and disinformation in CAR is deeply rooted in narratives of fear, often linked to the history of the conflict, which makes it particularly difficult to deconstruct. Peacebuilders can play an important role in working with communities to vocalise their experiences with conflict, share their ongoing frustrations, create safe spaces for them to unpack the reasons for generating and spreading mis- and disinformation, and critically examine information received in the current – rather than exclusively past – context.
- 4. Build on emerging forms of civic masculinity.** The research identified a form of civic masculinity emerging in Sibut based on social responsibility, dialogue, inclusion and peaceful participation in community life. These norms steer civic participation towards actions useful for social cohesion and conflict prevention, and could be used to tackle gendered mis- and disinformation. For example, young men could be supported to challenge the spread of mis- and disinformation in their social circles by highlighting inappropriate narratives, reporting sources to fact-checking platforms and refusing to amplify gendered hate speech.
- 5. Strengthen gender-sensitive digital literacy skills and mechanisms.** Research participants felt strongly that the fight against mis- and disinformation should start from within families and communities and work outwards. Peacebuilding organisations could partner with media experts to facilitate training for communities on fact-checking tools, the use of AI to spread mis- and disinformation, evaluating content and verifying sources. Following training, community action plans could be established with focal points nominated and tasked with verifying reported information, exploring patterns of mis- and disinformation and helping communities to analyse and manage their reactions to such information (for example, through counter-messaging, critical thinking campaigns, and reclaiming of digital spaces for community dialogue). Older people present a particularly high-risk group in terms of transmitting mis- and disinformation but have largely been left behind in interventions to date: any training must be designed and delivered in ways that are accessible to them.

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