



Defenders Manual

(An Active Citizen Guide To Participating
In Elections And Combating Fake News And
Misinformation In Ghana)



About **BudgIT Ghana**

BudgIT Ghana is a civic, nonprofit organisation dedicated to enhancing citizens' understanding of public spending and promoting transparency and accountability in governance. Founded in 2020, BudgIT Ghana has quickly become a pioneer in social advocacy, leveraging technology to simplify complex government data.

Through innovative tech tools, creative visual intelligence methods, infographics, online interfaces, interactive applications, and grassroots sensitisation, BudgIT Ghana delivers clear and accessible information about government activities to the public. Our work focuses on fiscal analysis, civic technology, election transparency and data representation, health advocacy, extractives, and education, ensuring citizens have the necessary information to demand accountability and promote institutional improvement.

About **Civic Hive**

Founded in 2017 as the innovation centre of BudgIT, Civic Hive was set up to create an innovative virtual and physical space for partnerships and to raise civic tech leaders/solutions in Nigeria. It was also set up to improve the capacity of existing non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and media organisations, making a significant impact within Nigeria.

Civic Hive has incubated 34 civic start-ups and supported over 115 organisations in Nigeria. It has continued to support existing and new organisations to promote solutions that connect citizens to the government, foster institutional efficiency, and raise citizens' awareness of social issues around them.

Civic Hive aims to stimulate citizens' interest in public data and, hence, trigger discussions towards better governance. The organisation is committed to the principles of open data and governance, citizen participation, and data transparency.

In 2020, Civic Hive received operational independence from BudgIT and registered as a full non-profit organisation.

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Disclaimer: BudgIT Ghana has produced this document to provide information on civic education. It accurately reflects our reliable and fact-based views. Whilst reasonable care has been taken in preparing it, no responsibility or liability is accepted for errors or opinions expressed due to the information provided in this manual.

Who is an Active Citizen?

An **Active Citizen** is a person who actively takes responsibility and initiative in areas of public concern such as governance, crime prevention, transparency, accountability, election, and public life of a community in an **informed, committed, and constructive manner**.

1.1 How to be an Active Citizen?



Pay your Tax: Your tax is a percentage paid to the government, which is used to provide social amenities and many other community needs. Every employed citizen must ensure they pay their tax; it is a civic duty.



Ask Questions: Learning is our job, and the country will benefit if we, as citizens, take advantage of every chance to participate in civic activities and contribute to solving social issues in our neighbourhoods.



Register to Vote: Every individual in Ghana has the right to vote at age 18. To ensure your representation in government, you must fulfil your civic duty; doing so is always in the interest of everyone in the society at large.



Respect the Constitution and obey all local and national laws: The Constitution is a nation's most essential document, and its residents should be prepared to uphold its laws without reservation.



Know your rights and protect those of others: The Constitution is a binding legal document that must be followed. Every citizen needs to be aware of their rights and be prepared to use the hashtag #AskQuestions when those rights are violated. We must learn to respect and stand up for one another, especially regarding our liberties and freedoms.



Know and Engage with your Representatives: Whoever the citizens elect to represent them in the Parliament, they should take an interest in them.

Request periodic town hall meetings with your representatives to discuss potential legislation or suggest local projects. 275 Members of Parliament, also known as Representatives, represent the 275 constituencies. Recognise who represents your constituency and start communicating with them frequently.



Participate in your Local Community: If we want to see the changes we are demanding as citizens, we must all engage in what is happening in our areas, whether through street cleaning, recreational activities, awareness drives, or volunteering.

1.2 Why is your Vote Important?

Voting is our civic responsibility.

It is one of those tools by which our country has guaranteed our inalienable rights throughout our democratic history. Your vote has determined how parliamentarians act in our interests.

But what happens when people don't vote?

Consider this scenario: You doubt the impact of your "one" vote, believing that corruption is rampant and change is impossible. As a result, you choose not to participate in Election Day. Unfortunately, this will cause low voter turnout, typically benefiting the incumbents - individuals you do not like.

Consequently, despite your dissatisfaction, they are re-elected, leaving your preferred candidates out of office and further intensifying your dislike of your government. Reflect on this situation: how can things improve in such circumstances?

In other words, your vote determines who will affect public policy at all levels of governance.

Three words say it all: **Your. Vote. Counts.**

Voting gives you the power to create positive change for your community and determine a better quality of life for you and your family. It ensures that your shared values and issues are prioritised and that you play a key role in choosing who represents you and where government funding and resources will go.

1.3 How to Choose a Political Leader

As election season approaches, many politicians will come around canvassing for your support. They know every vote matters and will use different means to entice you to support them.

Given several factors, it can be challenging to identify your ideal candidate, and you might wonder, "How do I determine the best candidate?"

The steps in the list below will assist you in selecting the best candidate to vote for.

Decide which issues are most important to you.

Always remember that elected representatives are there to speak for you. Identify the problems you want the representatives to focus on when they take office and ensure they align with the candidate's manifesto.

Know the contestants

Knowing all the candidates for a given elective position is critical to making an informed choice. This will help you understand the strengths and consider the weaknesses of all candidates before choosing those who align with your objectives based on their manifestos and other criteria.

Make independent research

Do not vote for a candidate because someone told you to. Investigate what they claim or desire to offer for you and your community. Understand what they're talking about and what the evidence reveals about them.

More importantly, learn more about their educational background and whether they have any criminal history or corruption records. If they have held elective posts in the past, consider how their tenure was and whether they provided exemplary service to the community.

Avoid personal bias

It is conceivable that our prejudices influence our decisions. Do not let links to the candidates, shared ethnicity, or religion affect your vote choice.

Vote based on their abilities, skills, knowledge, experience, and intellectual capacity. Don't let your prejudices influence you. Make your choice based on the person you believe is capable, responsible, and willing to put the country and people first.

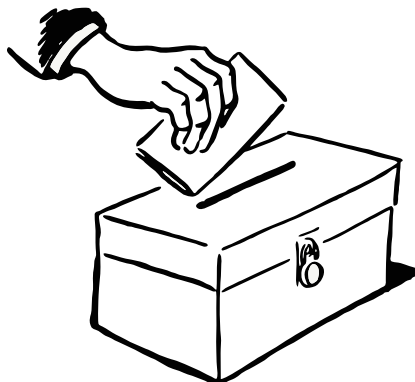
Go out and vote on election day.

Remember that the quest for the ideal candidate continues after your research. Since elections are about numbers, the candidate receiving the most votes will be declared the winner.

Once you decide who you think is the best candidate for the job, vote for the candidate. Only then will they have a chance of winning the election.

Election and Participatory Governance:

Values of your Vote and Values to Vote For.



1.4 How To Vote in An Election

Here is a step-by-step guide on how to vote in an election at the polling station:

1. On election day, go to the polling station with your voter ID card and join the queue if you need anything. Please don't jump the queue.
2. A polling assistant will check your particulars in the name reference list.
3. A verification officer will verify your identity as a registered voter with the verification machine.
4. You will be issued a Presidential Ballot paper. Please check to see if it has no marks and ensure it has the validating stamp.
5. Make your way to the Voting Booth and thumbprint (correctly) your choice of candidate.
6. Cast your vote in the Presidential Ballot Box. Please make sure it is the correct box.
7. Proceed to the next Polling Assistant for a Parliamentary Ballot Paper.
8. Proceed to the Parliamentary Voting Booth and thumbprint (correctly) your choice of MP.
9. Cast your ballot in the Parliamentary Ballot Box. Please make sure it is in the correct box.
10. Please leave the Polling Station after voting. You can return at 5 pm for the count.

1.5 Your Right as a Voter

A person is eligible to vote who -

- (a) is a citizen of Ghana;
- (b) is 18 years of age or above;
- (c) is of sound mind;
- (d) is resident or ordinarily resident in an electoral area and
- (e) is not prohibited by any law in force from registering as a voter



Combating Misinformation and Fake News During Electoral Cycle

2.1 What is Misinformation, Information overload, Disinformation, and Fake News

1. Misinformation: Misinformation is false or inaccurate information shared without the intent to deceive. Those who spread misinformation may believe it to be accurate or not fully realise it is incorrect.

Example: Sharing outdated election statistics unknowingly.

2. Information Overload: This occurs when too much information is available on a particular topic, making it difficult for individuals to process and make informed decisions.

Example: Constantly receiving large amounts of conflicting news and updates during a crisis, such as a pandemic or protests.

3. Disinformation: Deliberate false or misleading information, known as disinformation, is spread with the intent to deceive or manipulate. It is strategically used to influence opinions, cause harm, or blur the truth.

Example: A political campaign spreading false claims about an opponent to damage their reputation.

4. Fake News: Fake news is false or misleading information designed to look like legitimate news.

Example: A news website or blog publishing a false report about a politician's scandal to attract more traffic.

In summary:

- Misinformation is false information spread unintentionally.
- Information overload refers to an overwhelming volume of information.
- Disinformation is false information spread deliberately.
- Fake news is fabricated news stories designed to deceive.

2.2 Forms of Disinformation and Misinformation (such as False news, rumours, deep fakes, misleading statistics, etc.)

Some forms of misinformation and disinformation are listed below.

Satire/Parody: No intention to cause harm but has the potential to fool

Misleading Content: Misleading use of information to frame an issue or individual

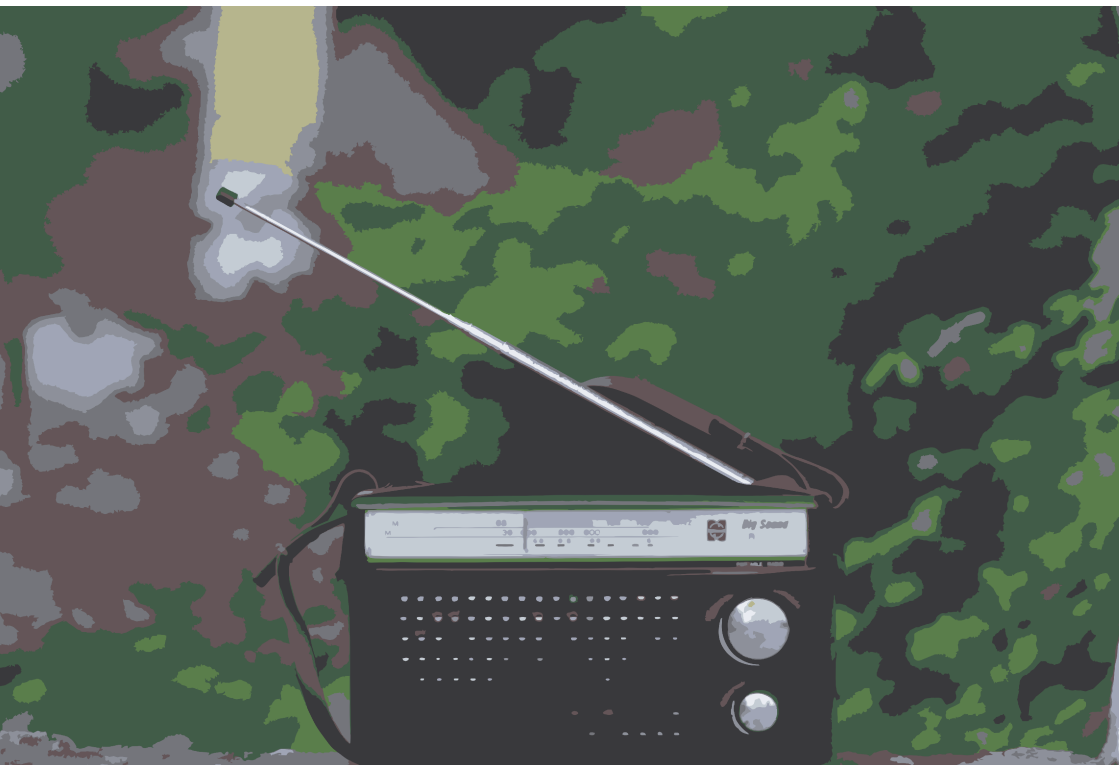
Imposter Content: When genuine sources are impersonated

Fabricated Content: New content is 100% false, designed to deceive and do harm

False Connection: When genuine content is shared with false contextual information

False context: When genuine content is shared with false contextual information

Manipulated Content: When genuine information or imagery is manipulated to deceive



2.3 Effect and Impact of Fake News and Information on People, Election, and Community On People:

- **Distortion of Reality:** Fake news and misinformation can distort individuals' perceptions of events and issues, leading to misguided judgements.
- **Polarisation:** People may develop more substantial and extreme views because they consume only biased or incorrect information, making reaching common ground on social issues difficult.

On Elections:

- **Impacting Voter Opinions:** Misinformation and fake news can influence voters' decisions by spreading false narratives about candidates, policies, or electoral processes.
- **Suppressing Voter Turnout:** Disinformation campaigns may deliberately spread false information about voting dates, locations, or eligibility, discouraging citizens from voting.
- **Threat to Electoral Credibility:** If people believe in the fake narrative that elections are rigged or fraudulent based on disinformation, it undermines the credibility of the electoral process.

On Communities:

- **Incitement of Violence:** False narratives, particularly around sensitive issues such as elections, can incite violence.
- **Undermining Social Trust:** Misinformation breeds distrust within communities, not just in institutions but among individuals.
- **Increased Divisiveness:** When misinformation targets specific groups or communities, it can deepen divisions and create 'us vs. them' mentalities.

2.4 How misinformation can sway voter opinions and decisions.

- **Confirmation Bias:** Misinformation can exploit confirmation bias by reinforcing pre-existing beliefs or opinions. Voters are more likely to believe fake news that aligns with their political leanings.
- **Character Smears:** False stories or manipulated images of political candidates can erode their public image, affecting how voters perceive their integrity and capability for office.
- **Manipulation of Emotions:** Fake news often uses emotional appeals (fear, anger, or hope) to manipulate voter behaviour, especially around critical issues like national security, elections, or the economy.

2.5 Threats to the credibility of the electoral process.

- **Delegitimizing Results:** Claims of widespread voter fraud without evidence undermine trust in the democratic process.
- **Cyber Influence:** Misinformation spread via online platforms can weaken the credibility of election results, making them seem manipulated or biased.
- **Confusion Among Voters:** Disinformation campaigns designed to confuse voters about their rights or the voting process can delegitimize the electoral process wildly if many people are misinformed.

2.6 Potential to incite violence and undermine social trust.

- **Social Media Amplification:** Platforms like Facebook or Twitter can quickly spread false information, creating a feedback loop in which misinformation fuels anger among citizens, which can escalate into real-world violence.
- **Undermining Democratic Institutions:** When trust in elections, media, and government institutions erodes, the potential for civil unrest increases as people feel disconnected from political processes.

2.7 How to Spot and Report Misinformation and Fake News - Identification techniques include Fact-checking tools, reverse image search and source verification.

Here are some tools that can be used in identifying and fact-checking misinformation during election:



FactCheck Ghana:

A fact-checking platform dedicated to countering misinformation in Ghana, run by the Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA).

Link - <https://www.fact-checkghana.com/>



Africa Check:

A leading fact-checking organisation in Africa that focuses on verifying claims across the continent, including Ghana.

Link - <https://africacheck.org/fact-checks>



Dubawa Ghana:

A leading fact-checking organisation in Africa that focuses on verifying claims across the continent, including Ghana.

Link - <https://ghana.dubawa.org/category/fact-check/>



InVID::

A tool (PLUGIN) designed to verify the authenticity of videos and images on social media.

Link - <https://chromewebstore.google.com/detail/fake-news-debunker-by-inv/mhccpoafgdgbhjfjfhkcmgknndkeenfhe?hl=en>



Veracity mobile app:

This is a mobile app that uses reverse image search to detect whether an image has been altered or reused. It is useful for checking screenshots or memes.

Link - <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/veracity-reverse-image-search/id870153874>



Twitonomy:

Provides analytics for Twitter accounts to help verify the credibility of users sharing the content, primarily when screenshots of tweets are used.

Link - <https://www.twitonomy.com/auth.php>



SurfSafe:

This tool identifies where images, including screenshots, appear on the web. It helps debunk fake screenshots by tracking whether they've been manipulated from legitimate sources.

Link - <https://chromewebstore.google.com/detail/surfsafe-join-the-fight-a/hbpagabeiphkfhbboacggckhkkkipgdmh?hl=en>

Google Facts Check:

This tool enables you to search for already debunked stories and images and add ClaimReview markup to your fact checks.

Link -

<https://toolbox.google.com/factcheck/explorer/search/list:recent;hl=en>



Reverse Image Search:

This helps verify pictures to find out where else a photograph has been used and when it was used.

Link - <https://dnschecker.org/reverse-image-search.php>

TinEye Reverse Image Search:

This tool helps you discover where else a photo has been used and whether the one you have has been altered or manipulated. It also assists in finding the newest, oldest, and most modified photo versions.

Link - <https://tineye.com/>



FotoForensics:

It helps determine whether a photo was modified and the process that facilitated the image modification.

Link - <https://fotoforensics.com/>

YouTube Data Viewer:

This tool provides details of the video and its upload date. It also captures screenshots from videos for reverse image search to find other versions and earlier posts of the same video if they exist.

Link - https://ytlarge.com/youtube/video-data-viewer/#google_vignette

My Role as a Defender

Take a stand as an Active Citizen.

- As a citizen, you have a role to play in combating disinformation and misinformation everywhere and anywhere.

- a.** You can sign up for media literacy training or volunteer for public awareness campaigns;
- b.** Take a step in reporting and debunking false information that you know and you are aware of;
- c.** Support and follow the work of reputable media organisations, civic tech tools, and fact-checkers.

- As a student,

- a.** You can also empower fellow students to educate other peers about misinformation and its dangers;
- b.** Encouraging ethical use of social media and critical thinking.
- c.** Take an active step toward civic activities and promoting voter education on campus.

- As a Civil Society Organization, Faith-Based Organizations, Community-Based Organizations

- a.** Support public education by organising forums, workshops, and community engagement.
- b.** Strengthening community and institutional capacity to resist misinformation.

Call To Action

Mis- and disinformation are typical in elections, especially during national election cycles. While misinformation consists of false rumours and misconceptions about elections, disinformation is messages that purposely mislead voters.

As citizens, we need to look for trusted sources of information about elections. We all have a role and responsibility to combat the scourge of fake news and disinformation, mainly regarding elections in Ghana. We must take individual and collective action in reporting, safeguarding, and promoting safety online and offline.

Do you see something about elections that seems confusing, sensationalistic, or decreases your confidence in National elections? It might be misinformation or disinformation. Our team would like to hear about it. You can email us at **Budgitghana@budgit.org**. We will research the claims or posts and respond accordingly.





ghanaelections.budgit.org