

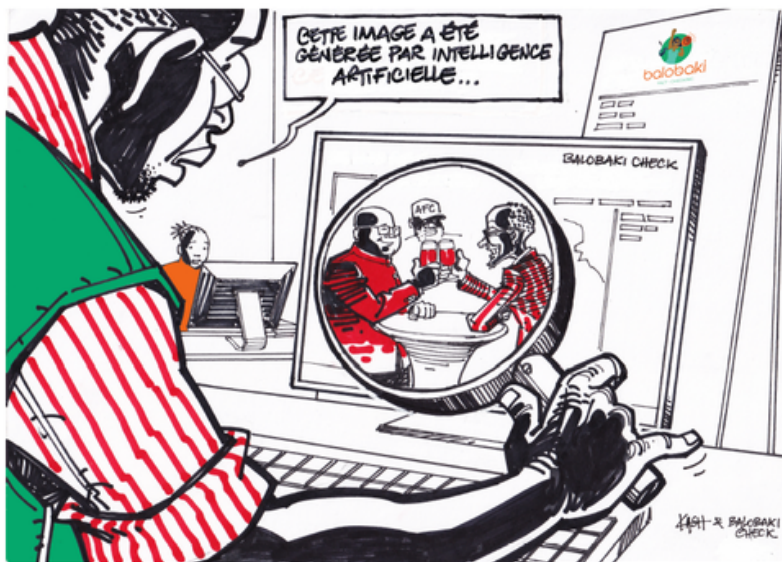


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FACT-CHECKING

Strengthening Resilience, Social Cohesion and Democracy in the DRC: Balobaki Check's Commitment to Information Integrity



FACT CHECKING D'ABORD, CERTITUDE APRÈS

Between September 2025 and June 2026, Balobaki Check documented and analysed the **accuracy of 631 dubious claims** and published 40 editions of the newsletter *DRC: Together for Peace - Pamoja Kwa Ajili Ya Amani* to **counter rumours and false information about the security situation and hate speech** in the East of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Distributed in over 220 WhatsApp groups, on social media, and via partnerships with 12 community radio stations, **Balobaki Check's content reached over 2 million people**, helping raise awareness among audiences about disinformation in conflict-affected areas.

Developing Critical Thinking in the Face of Disinformation: An Internet User's Journey

Blessing is a young internet user from Goma and an active member of the WhatsApp group Beni Post. Originally created to share information about the city of Beni, the second largest in the North Kivu Province in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the group quickly became a platform to share general, political and, above all, security-related information. However, in the context of the information warfare surrounding the conflict in eastern DRC, local individuals and social media accounts often manipulate information or misrepresent the statements of international officials to reinforce particular narratives about the conflict. These rumours and false claims can spread rapidly when shared on WhatsApp.

Since February 2026, Blessing says he has followed Balobaki Check's content in the group closely. His engagement has gone far beyond passive reading; he has undergone a profound intellectual transformation, shaped by the weekly newsletters, whether through Issue 22, which carefully debunked disinformation surrounding the arrival of a European Commissioner, or Issue 23, which addressed rumours about Corneille Nangaa's withdrawal and the alleged disappearance of Joseph Kabila. Although his work in civil society had already made him aware of the challenges posed by disinformation, he explains that Balobaki Check acted as a catalyst, significantly strengthening his analytical and critical thinking skills.

In Blessing's view, what sets Balobaki Check apart from other fact-checking initiatives is its educational approach, which goes beyond simply labelling information as "true" or "false". Its publications do more than deliver a verdict; they also reveal how the verification process works, exposing the methods used to establish the truth and enabling readers to adopt the tools of systematic scepticism for themselves. Understanding how to distinguish reliable information from manipulation becomes an empowering act.

Blessing recalls a time when identifying false information could be challenging. Today, that uncertainty has evolved into a valuable reflex. Whenever he receives a message on WhatsApp or social media, he immediately applies a methodical process: **who is the source? What is their track record and credibility? When was this content created?**

Developing a Fact-Checking System to Combat Disinformation in Conflict Reporting

Balobaki Check has developed an online training course that provides journalists and journalism students with a practical methodological framework for conducting rigorous fact-checking. Covering every aspect of the process, from analysing disinformation actors and managing risks to building relationships with communities and establishing an appropriate editorial structure, the course aims to help users move from ad hoc fact-checking into a sustainable and operational strategy. It is the first online training programme of its kind in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) specifically designed for French-speaking journalists.

This new level of rigour now leads him to systematically compare information with trusted sources such as Radio Okapi, RFI and France 24 before considering it reliable or sharing it with others.

"Before, I could doubt information without knowing how to act. Today, I question the source, the date, and I compare information. Balobaki Check helps to strengthen my critical thinking," he explains.

Although emblematic, Blessing's experience is not unique. In a Balobaki Check survey conducted across 83 WhatsApp groups, most of them based in eastern DRC, **87% of respondents said they verify information before sharing it since following Balobaki Check's content.** Only 13% said they do so rarely or never. These findings show that Balobaki Check's publications help strengthen verification habits, a crucial issue in WhatsApp groups where false information spreads quickly.

By adopting verification practices, internet users do more than ensure the accuracy of the information they personally consume; they also become a safeguard against the spread of falsehoods within their communities.

Today, Blessing acts as an ambassador for this necessary caution, encouraging others to verify information, consult official sources and break the chain of sharing uncertain content. In addition to responding to Balobaki Check's content, he regularly posts claims in the group for verification and even seeks the expertise of the Balobaki Check team present in the group. By encouraging other members to take part in the verification process, he helps strengthen fact-checking habits and promotes a culture of responsible information sharing within the community.

In a context marked by persistent community tensions in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, hate messages and false information fuel prejudice, stigmatisation and mistrust between communities. Founded in Kinshasa in 2022, Balobaki Check works to safeguard information integrity through journalist training, media literacy initiatives and the production of high-quality content.