Participant name: Stevie Hamilton

Participant organization: GEC

Interview with Stevie Hamilton, January 13, 2025

Jan 20 will be a change of administration and don’t know the mission.

The way we approach issue of GEC, direct, lead, coordinate fed gov efforts to recognize, understand and expose counter state sponsored information threats. Couple lines of activity, one GEC developed and executed programs focused on international partnerships that built society resilience to foreign manipulation, detailed reports

Proliferation of the African Center for Strategic Centers (https://africacenter.org/), most detailed and unclassified analysis. In terms of how broad the scope and nature, it laid out for us a big challenge how we deal with it, so pervasive. According to research, the number of coordinated disinfo campaigns quadrupled since 2022 with 60 percent led by foreign actors. These actors driving level of sophistication in how they attacked African media eco system.

We have seen the coups and how fast that takes place, see what happens in central African Republic, broad-based attacks on health programs. Way we have looked at how best to approach is the framework. Framework for countering foreign information manipulation. Our way of diplomatically engaging, our gov counterparts in how we bring the world together, how do we address these issues. Fundamental premise, agreeing on a common op picture of information env globally and second is on fundamental principles as global community to address those challenges. Way framework, **lays out five key action areas that partners that…** that say… **first is capacity building**, making sure the countries have human and technical capacity to deal with that. Another is are t**here laws and structures in gov that address the challenge**. Are there **structures, how do partner gov organize themselves to deal with this challenge**. And the **fourth, taking a whole of society approach. How do gov work with academia, research, thinktanks to address these issues**. The **fifth area a multilateral approach. These things are regional and borders are not borders**. Each country is going to agree to areas they will work on. That is where implementation plans come together. The ivory coast/cot’d is the only one where we have one signed. Three others under negotiation… Nigeria, Ghana and Senegal.

GEC has frameworks established with 26 countries, one for Cot’d is only one in Africa.

Whole purpose is to increase collaboration. Each country have different areas they agree. Each country decides what they want…

Capacity building?

Action area number three is capacity building. Typically where most countries in Africa, need a lot of capacity. As it stands, **Our fimi, not planning on giving out new grants but doesn’t mean we can’t assist in other ways. We may work with the brits or the EU that can do things we can’t do in terms of building that capacity.**

**Why cot’v?** (answer: mix of right country for global fragility act and request from cot’d)one it depends on what the priorities are of the department and I was not part of those discussions, at osd. One thing, we align our strategy with what is important to the building and the SCPS, Strategy… gec support to global fragility act to prevent conflict and promote stability. They had this global approach, with west Africa they made it regional. Ivory coast part of that regional approach. Going to independent countries, maybe five countries, but in terms of ivory, they approached us. We are concerned what we see in the Sahel and what Russia doing and so they came to us, which makes it helpful. Ivory coast being part of coastal west….

I’m not on the threats team… we had strategic influence initiative, took high profile African cultural events and worked through public diplomacy sections, supporting campaigns featuring prominent us athletes and coupled with local influencers to amplify things of local disinformation. That first role out, the pilot, was January last year. It is event based. Who is the lead: I’m part of the team.

**Plan to teach students, journalsits and academics**

Second thing, we focus on expanding our outreach to institutions we identify as most vulnerable. Support education, grant money to media support org, all focusing on building or increasing society resilience to fimi. Examples? April 29 last year, signed MOU with ivory coast. After this launched plan of action to teach students, journalist and academic to debunk counter fimi. Grants with usaid, Africom, to run a series of workshops throughout the country that worked with civil society to train.

Africa tech challenge

Early 2023, host us Africa tech challenge, in ivory coast (… we hosted the one and it focused on bringing regional technologists together to innovate their solutions to dealing with their challenges. (implementer? Several partners. Implementer was technology engagements team. They worked to facilitate the event but we were all involved.).

Code for Africa analysis

Other thing we did we worked Code for Africa, they provided really interesting relevant analysis of info space as it centered on how Russia carrying out disinformation campaigns. Not only did they share analysis… did workshop to provide capacity building for partners on the ground.

Capacity building training

Then we worked with Africa center for strategic studies, they hosted capacity building workshop to counter fimi that brought together not only military but civilian side and trained them on software, analytical techniques and brought capacity on how to recognize and expose and counter fimi.

Voice-over tech Northern Cot’d

We also worked with usaid, taking some of their programs where they focused on hinterlands, focused on programs that went out where literacy rates low in those areas. They worked with those folks to allow them to use technology. Voiceover technology to pass messages in … northern part of ivory cost, those populations, their literacy rate is low and they don’t have access to smart phones but impacted by dis and misinfo. They had no way to share info and receive info so we worked with partners to address that technology gap.

The exposure part you are familiar with.

Impact of exposure? Clear repercussions of what we did. M&E showing we achieved disruption. We know a lot of the actors do not want to be exposed. And then unexpected impact. For instance, we knew… we could not say exactly but one … the health minister, an alumni of our programming, went to the senate floor and started to debunk misin and talked about how us programming very helpful and… we didn’t ask. Part of exposure Is hoping that journalists, researchers, civ ifl society, gov, take info and be able to counter fimi.

Risks and benefits of capacity building? Risks are if you have to understand what those partners need to provide the training and consistent with our goals and value snad objectives. That being said, if you don’t teach them to do this themselves then we would never make way. Whether any western partner, we are not most credible voice. Typically you want to build voices that have most at stake. We have to do capacity building but need to make sure working across interagency to identify needs, and identify who is best to fill those gaps. Always risk that some training may have dual use purposes. They can deal with the threat and be the threat. We are not domestically exempt from that. We can be just like you. So there are risks but we have to do the same sort of risk assessments we do with program and capacity building efforts.

Some international partners and allies, the brits may not be the best to partner with. The Germans have been excellent partners. There are other partners who have more interest than you’d think. Check republic. Why Germans/checks? A lot of these leaders were educated in the check. Germans very active in west Africa. They have their own shared objectives.

European Union, the Germans that have been leading in West Africa.

Mark Dirkson… ACSS. NDU.

Code for Africa.

Also 25ish, plus,