Background Information

During the COVID-19 pandemic, as the world reels from the compounded effects of lockdowns, travel bans, and the ensuing economic and food crises, the need for accurate and verified information is essential to combat the virus, and potentially lifesaving. Unfortunately however, misinformation has spread with vigor rivaling the virus in its spread and contagiousness. This has the effect of heightening health risks, creating panic and division, and otherwise complicating efforts to effectively combat this virus that has brought the entire world to its knees and exacerbated inequality. Accurate and verified information, on the other hand, empowers people with the knowledge they need to stay safe while simultaneously building trust within society and between nations at a time when it is needed most.

Enter Verified, an initiative of the United Nations in collaboration with Purpose. Verified’s mission is to provide content that counters the spread of misinformation with verified fact-based advice and stories. Organisations, businesses, civil society, and media platforms all partner with Verified to achieve this. Relying on everyday people, its team of communicators, creatives and researchers produce content based on the latest information and guidance from the United Nations, the World Health Organisation, and other UN agencies.

Verified India: Taking Action

The following update was written by Kritica, a member of Team Verified in India, and shared by Verified on June 13, 2020. Kritica wrote:

“First, a little context—India has 297,535 confirmed cases of COVID-19, the fifth highest in the world. According to World Health Organisation data 8,498 people have died from the virus.”

Lockdown
measures in India are beginning to ease and many people have questions about what to do to stay safe. In the midst of worry and confusion a lot of dubious advice has been circulating on social media platforms. Much of it is posted as from experts but unfortunately the content is not scientifically correct. This is an example of some misinformation that has been circulating recently:

Polling from the social network Helo shows nearly a quarter of Indians consider their family members to be a trusted source of information. So we’ve been working to provide accurate and verified content that people can share with their relatives. To do this we’ve partnered with Helo, which has over 50 million users in India.

Working with two well-known doctors Dr. K.K Aggarwal and Dr. Naveen Thacker, we hosted a live event on Helo for people to get answers to their questions about Coronavirus. Five thousand people tuned in live to hear from the doctors and the video of their conversation has been viewed 1 million times since it aired. As well as providing medical advice, Dr. Aggarwal and Dr. Thacker highlighted the need to share information responsibly.
This is just the beginning. Next we'll be partnering with a group of scientists who have banded together to share accurate information about Coronavirus online.

In a country with 1.3 billion people that speak 22 different languages the importance of safe and accurate Coronavirus information is paramount. We’re working together to make that happen.”

References


1 As of this writing (on June 24, 2020), that number has risen to 456,183 confirmed cases and 14,476 deaths.