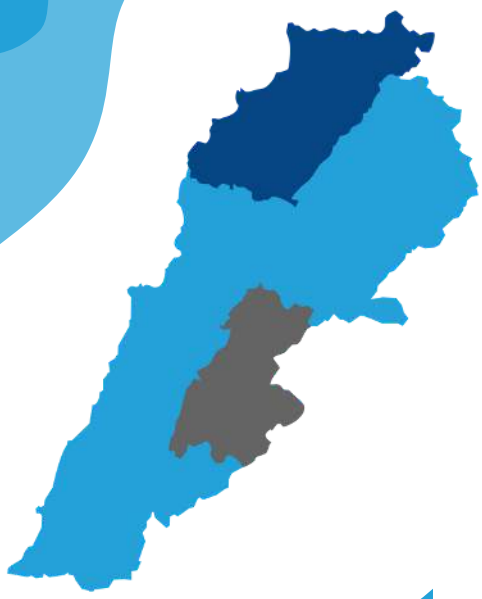
Rooted in Trust

Community Bulletin #3

Lebanon
1 to 15 February 2022

Introduction to Rooted in Trust

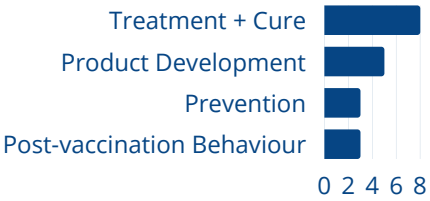
Rooted in Trust (RiT) is an Internews project supporting humanitarian and public health agencies in tackling rumors and misinformation about COVID-19, particularly among vulnerable population groups such as refugees and migrants. The first stage (RiT1) ran from October 2020 to February 2021 with over 2,774 rumors collected in Lebanon. (1) The project was re-launched in September 2021 and will run until end of 2022.



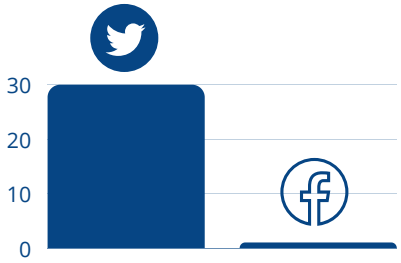
About This Bulletin

In this bulletin, Internews profiles commonly occurring rumors across social media sites in Lebanon between 1 and 15 February 2022. During this period, 21 rumors were collected from Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, and Instagram, in addition to private groups and accounts that have a relatively high user engagement. Two unique rumors were subsequently selected for this bulletin which fall under the recurring themes of Treatment & Cure, in addition to Prejudice & Stigma.

Top Rumor Themes



Rumor Sources



Methodology

We collect our data manually from social media, digital engagement activities, face-to-face (offline) data collection, data from local media, and rumor data collected from other humanitarian organizations. . We analyze our data focusing on rumor, themes, trends, level of engagement, and frequency/level of risk .

COVID-19 situation overview in the country

According to WHO, there have been 77,401 new cases in Lebanon and 256 new deaths in the first two weeks of February 2022, (2) with the virus spreading particularly among younger age groups such as the 20 to 29-year-olds. (3) Almost 36% of the country's population has received two vaccine doses, while nearly 34% of Syrian refugees in Lebanon have received at least one vaccine dose. (4) Lebanon remains at Level 4 of community transmission, meaning that high vigilance is recommended with a focus on adhering to public health and social measures and encouraging vaccine uptake. (5)

5,326,940
Doses Administered

9,855
Death

1,020,204
COVID-19 Cases

Rumor #1

Treatment and Cure

"Rosmary contains a cure for Covid and Alzheimer."

Shared on Twitter, WhatsApp and Facebook in Arabic with more than 1000 likes and 10 comments on 14/2/2022

Fact Checking

- The common herb rosemary is often used in food and as a natural treatment for symptoms linked to indigestion (6) but there is no scientific evidence that it is effective against COVID-19 or Alzheimer's disease.
- Taking undiluted rosemary oil or very large amounts of rosemary leaf is likely unsafe and can cause vomiting, sun sensitivity, and skin redness. (7)
- Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, while Alzheimer's disease is a neurological disorder that affects memory and cognitive skills. The two diseases are very medically different and medicines are highly unlikely to treat both.
- COVID-19 can be prevented by vaccination and taking precautionary measures including wearing a mask, ventilation, physical distancing, and hand washing.

Recommendations

for outreach workers and communities

- Although rumors about natural or herbal treatments for COVID-19 may not always be directly harmful, it is important for people to fully understand both the nature of the virus and to be able to distinguish it from other diseases. Tailored health awareness sessions led by trusted community health workers or health professionals from the community itself can support this.
- Natural cures linked to herbs and essential oils are usually part of a community's heritage and history and it is important not to dismiss this knowledge as it would break the trust between health outreach teams and affected people.
- An effective approach is to exchange scientific knowledge while listening to the community's knowledge of natural cures and finding complementary approaches so that COVID-19, its prevention and treatment, are still taken seriously. Use localized and contextualized awareness materials interpreted in the local language and absent of any judgement.

1787 Corona

1214 Vaccine

Sources

1. https://internews.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/RiT_Findings_Recommendations_Lebanon-English.pdf
2. https://covid19.who.int/region/emro/country/lb
3. WHO Daily Brief 15 February 2022
4. Impact Open Data (cib.gov.lb)
5. WHO Daily Brief 15 February 2022
6. https://www.webmd.com/vitamins/ai/ingredientmono-154/rosemary
7. https://www.webmd.com/vitamins/ai/ingredientmono-154/rosemary
8. WHO Daily Brief 15 February 2022

Important Numbers and Helplines:

- MOPH Hotlines: Corona **1787** | Vaccine **1214** (both free)
- COVID-19 call center **01-594459**
- Airport Quarantine Section **01-629352**
- Preventive Medicine Center **01-843769** | **01-830300**
- Epidemiological Surveillance Unit **01-614194** | **01-614196**
- WHO Lebanon **01-612970/1/2**

Rumor #2

Prejudice and Stigma

"Unfortunately, my sister decided to divorce her husband after receiving the [Covid] vaccine. She had agreed with him a while ago that if he took the vaccine, she would be separated from him, but I think he did not take the matter seriously, and she is currently very insistent despite the interventions of the elders of the family for the sake of her children. May God destroy whoever was behind these vaccinations and the misfortune they caused."

Shared on Twitter in Arabic with a dozen likes on 8/2/2022

Fact Checking

- There is no evidence that COVID-19 vaccines cause misfortune, however it is true that the ongoing pandemic has exacerbated many already vulnerable population groups' socio-economic situation.
- More than 5,326,940 people in Lebanon have received at least one vaccine dose and the vast majority have suffered no adverse consequences.
- The COVID-19 vaccine may cause mild side effects such a sore arm or fatigue for around 24 hours. The vaccine is highly effective at reducing the symptoms and severity of COVID-19, which has resulted in significantly reduced admissions to hospital, and may also reduce transmission.
- According to WHO and the Ministry of Public Health, 68% of COVID-19 cases in Lebanon are in unvaccinated people, highlighting yet again the importance of getting vaccinated. (8)

Recommendations

for outreach workers and communities

- Sharing key data with vaccine hesitant communities, such as the fact that most severe COVID-19 cases are now occurring in unvaccinated people, is crucial to raising awareness amongst those who may not have access to accurate information, or communities with low literacy rates.
- This can be done through infographics and other graphic products which can help highlight the impact of vaccination.
- Organizing listening groups to delve into the underlying causes of vaccine hesitancy is also key to better understanding and responding to the community's needs.

Practical Resources

- LRC Coronavirus Hub
- MOPH/UNICEF Updated FAQ on COVID-19 Vaccines
- WHO dashboard
- WHO COVID-19 page
- Protect yourself (English/Arabic)
- Q&A (English/Arabic)
- WHO Lebanon website

The VaxBus will be visiting South Lebanon and Nabatiyeh governorates for the first time this month and anyone above 12 years of age who has yet to receive a COVID-19 vaccine will be eligible to receive the Pfizer vaccine without any prior appointment.

See the schedule below for more information, the buses are usually present from 9 am to 2 pm in front of the respective municipality buildings:

Tuesday 01/03/2022	Rshaf - Bnt Jbeil
Wednesday 02/03/2022	Hnawiye - Sour
Thursday 03/03/2022	Tair Debba - Sour
Friday 04/03/2022	Ansariyyeh - Saida

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