



Internews

Salig Bangsamoro

(Trust Bangsamoro) is Rooted in Trust Philippines' biweekly rumor bulletin for humanitarians. Rooted in Trust is a global and local humanitarian response run by Internews to fight the spread of rumors on COVID-19. In the Philippines, the focus is on the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

This week's bulletin answers concerns we heard from the ground. People questioned the implementation of a stricter quarantine rule in Lanao del Sur as they believe that Metro Manila has returned to normal. In Maguindanao, people said getting tested for COVID-19 will tag them as positive and believe that taking home remedies can cure COVID-19. The bulletin presents answers to counter these rumors and what people can do next.

- As of October 25, 2020, the region has reported a total of 1,589 cases, with most active cases in Lanao del Sur. Despite decrease in active cases in Tawi-Tawi, it is being observed due to an outbreak in nearby Sabah, Malaysia and with Zamboanga hospitals nearing full capacity.
- The BARMM Ministry of Health launched the BIDA Solusyon sa COVID-19 campaign and encouraged support for its localization.

COVID-19 SITUATION IN BARMM

How we do it: The rumors presented here were collected by the Coalition of Moro Youth Movements, a consortium of Moro youth groups advocating for peace and inclusive development in BARMM, and the Initiatives for Dialogue and Empowerment through Alternative Legal Services (IDEALS), a non-profit organization helping in the legal and technical needs of marginalized, disempowered and vulnerable groups. These were collected from October 1-15, 2020 from various platforms (FB, posts, comments, stories, and Instagram) and peer-to-peer sharing via word of mouth. The selection was based on a risk assessment matrix that accounts for the frequency of the scenario or social media engagements and its potential impact on the community.



WHAT ARE PEOPLE SAYING

1

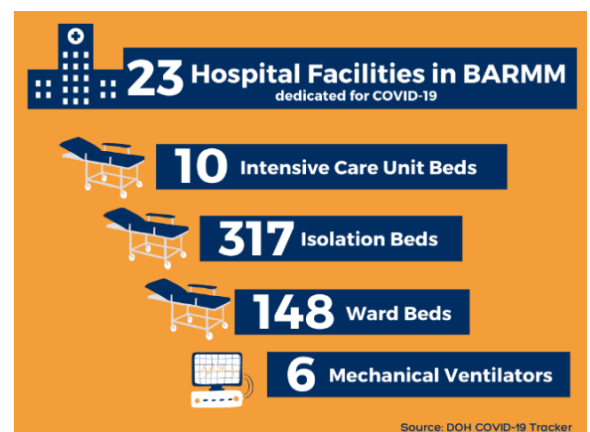
METRO MANILA IS BACK TO NORMAL; LANAO DEL SUR IS UNDER STRICTER QUARANTINE STATUS AS PEOPLE STILL BELIEVE IN COVID-19

"In Manila, their local government has let their people to go back to normal... surprisingly, our province Lanao del Sur is still getting stricter because they still believe in COVID-19, even if the pandemic is now over." (Male, 26-35 years old)

This Facebook post garnered 755 reaction, 181 comments, 214 shares in the span of 4 days from October 3 to October 6. The post has been deleted but given the large engagement, the rumor has the potential to be passed on to the community.

WHY DOES IT MATTER: This rumor is rooted from mistrust with government policies, including alleged selective treatment between Metro Manila and those in BARMM. This also relate to frustrations during Martial Law in Mindanao, which lasted for over 2 years and ended on December 31, 2019. It's important to stress that quarantine measures must be communicated effectively and with these complex issues in mind to help people understand the motivations behind strict lockdowns.

Metro Manila is not back to normal. It is under general community quarantine (GCQ), where few public transportations can operate and curfews, social distancing, and wearing of both face shields and masks in public are still in effect.



ANSWER

Lanao del Sur's stricter quarantine measures until October 31, 2020 was done to control the spread of the pandemic by containing it within a particular area, which eases pressure on the healthcare system overwhelmed by rising COVID-19 infections. Metro Manila and other regions have healthcare systems with higher capacities so restriction may vary accordingly. BARMM only has 23 hospitals responding to COVID-19 and major hospitals in the region are at 60-90% utilization of COVID-19 dedicated beds.

WHAT ARE PEOPLE SAYING

2 STIGMA ON TESTING

A lot of people do not want to get rapid test or swab test as they develop a perception that getting checked for COVID-19 tells that a person is positive for COVID-19.

Feedback from peer-to-peer sharing via word of mouth in Maguindanao

WHAT ARE PEOPLE SAYING

3 SELF-MEDICATION

People say that paracetamol can treat COVID-19 and that when COVID-19 symptoms are observed, one is not encouraged to get checked or medically diagnosed but just fight it with antibiotics. At the start of quarantine some people have also shared that egg, garlic, and banana could cure COVID-19.

Feedback from peer-to-peer sharing via word of mouth in Maguindanao



Testing is caring.

ANSWER

- When you decide to get tested, you choose to protect not just yourself but also your family and the entire community.
- The World Health Organization reminds the public that the virus does not discriminate, so neither should we. To date, Reverse Transcription Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT-PCR) is still considered as the gold standard for the detection of COVID-19. This is usually done through collecting swab samples from the nose or the throat. Getting tested will not put your personal health information at-risk, personal identifiers and health status will only be available and shared among health care providers.



- At present, there are no medicines that have been shown to prevent or cure COVID-19.
- Traditional or home remedies may provide comfort and treat symptoms, but do not cure the virus. Paracetamol can manage fever, which is one of the COVID-19 symptoms, but it does not treat the infection.
- **The World Health Organization (WHO) does not recommend to self-medicate.** There are ongoing clinical trials of both western and traditional medicines and the WHO is coordinating efforts to develop vaccines and medicines to prevent and treat COVID-19.

ANSWER

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Social stigma may result in people hiding symptoms, avoiding healthcare support, and not adopting preventive measures to maintain their health. This makes make it even more difficult to control the spread of the virus and reduces the effectiveness government and humanitarian response. Follow the guidelines created by WHO, UNICEF and IFRC on preventing and addressing social stigma associated with COVID-19.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Self-medication is a common practice in the Philippines, which has even led to antibiotics abuse. This practice can be associated with cost of seeking healthcare, access to medical facilities, and social stigma. Family perceptions, culture, and religion can also influence a patient's decision about seeking healthcare. People also tend to self-medicate when a disease is perceived as not severe and with mild symptoms. As a result, they may wait until symptoms are severe before going to hospitals. Late diagnosis and management of COVID-19

HOW CAN HUMANITARIAN ACTORS HELP?

- Rumors and misinformation fill a void. At the core of these rumors are mistrust towards the government and the healthcare system, and the lack of health seeking behavior of Filipinos.
- Focusing on these gaps and the information needs of the community can help fight misinformation and rumors and strengthen public health messaging.
- Discussion with the community may include topics on:
 - COVID-19 symptoms, the importance testing and contact tracing, and patient confidentiality
 - COVID-19 cases and growth rate, and its relation the limited resources of hospitals, such as bed space capacity and equipment
- Support rumor collection in BARMM. Get in touch with Rooted in Trust to know more.

