

RUMOR BULLETIN #2

RUMOR TRACKING UPDATE FOR JOURNALISTS | NOVEMBER 1-12, 2020



Internews

Internews' **Rooted in Trust** project, funded by USAID, seeks to respond to the "infodemic" (misinformation, fake news, rumors, and excess information) that deepens discrimination and affects access to basic services and assistance for vulnerable communities in Nariño. It is directed in particular towards the migrant and LGBTQI+ population of Ipiales and Tumaco.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING



Male
Facebook comment, Oct 2020

"The relatives of a one person reported dead from COVID-19 were curious, so they opened the body bag and saw that the body was alive and under a strong sedative. COVID-19 Cartel...this is Colombia..."

THE COVID-19 CARTEL

This comment, which went viral on Facebook, includes a video that attempts to "show" patients who were buried alive to appear as dead from COVID-19. The comment refers to a dangerous rumor, according to which, the health providers, doctors, and nurses have created a mafia in order to steal government money by inflating the COVID-19 statistics. On social media, there is also a rumor about million dollar contracts with funeral homes to cremate the remains of all patients so that it is impossible to tell if their death was caused by the virus.



REPORTING TIPS

- When receiving a report about corruption in the health system of Nariño, **remember** that as a journalist, you should examine all possible sources to determine the context and reality of the situation.
- **Verify** all sources of information, ask yourself, "Are these sources involved in the investigation in question? What are their interests in this investigation?"
- **Confirm and verify** any reports you receive independently using concrete data. While corruption is a serious offense, so is overgeneralizing.
- Some political leaders and representatives use their personal social media accounts to give information about COVID-19, **corroborate** that data with official figures.
- **Avoid** giving personal opinions when presenting research, so that your audience doesn't confuse the facts with your points of view.
- **Provide** dates, websites, and details to ensure the audience of your publications doesn't make generalized judgements about health providers that aren't based in the facts.

FACTS

- In June, the Minister of Health, Fernando Ruíz, announced the existence of a "**COVID-19 Cartel**" that ensures patients stay in Intensive Care Units in order to charge more money for occupying hospital beds and using ventilators in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- At the same time, the Superintendent of Health sent out rules and standards for the clinical management of patients with COVID-19 in [External Notice 012](#), with the aim of avoiding abuses like those referred to by the Minister.
- The [Colombian Association of Clinics and Hospitals](#) demanded that authorities name the entities involved in corruption.
- In July (and [extended to October 2nd](#)), the Ministry of Health, issued a [directive](#) to regulate the payment of beds for hospitalized patients.
- The [Ministry of Health ordered](#) the bodies of the deceased from a confirmed, suspected, or probable COVID-19 diagnosis to be cremated.
- The Ministry of Health has also reported corrupt contracts between funeral homes and mayors and governors, that included duplicated costs for cremating cadavers.

Sources:
Ministry of Health
Superintendent of Health
Colombian Association of Hospitals and Clinics

SUGGESTED CONTACTS

- **Press Office: Superintendency of Health**
Ilba Janneth Cárdenas Fonseca
Teléfono: (1) 7442000 EXT 24000
- **Press Office: Instituto Nacional de Salud**
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HUMANIZING REPORTING

"A report is a complete story, but with one important factor: humanized details."
Fundación Gabo



WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING



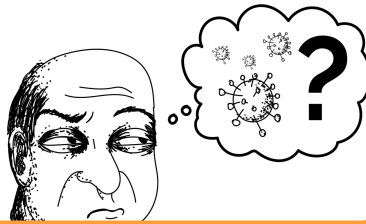
Male

Facebook comment, September 2020

"...Each time the message about COVID-19 becomes clearer, now we understand that it was more of a political show on a massive scale than a deadly pandemic like the media made us think at the beginning."

THE COVID-19 PARTY HAS ENDED NOW WE HAVE A SCARY REALITY

The end of lockdown in Nariño has sparked more rumors about the "conspiracy theory" that returning to regulated activities confirms the pandemic was always a farse.



REPORTING TIPS

- **Report** on the analysis carried out by local, national, and international health authorities regarding COVID-19 cases prevented during the national quarantine.
- **State** specific facts. Use the figures available from the Departmental Institute of Health, which show that in Nariño, the quarantine strengthened the response system in the network of hospitals and prevented a collapse from over-occupancy in the ICU beds.
- **Carry out** reports about the economic crisis that the department fell into, and explain to your audience that the end of lockdown does not mean the end of the pandemic, and because of that it is necessary to continue measures of self protection.
- **Remember** that verified information should arrive to the people of Nariño in the simplest form possible. Use example, explain and clarify terms.
- **Don't be afraid** of statistics. Seek advice from experts to inform and compare statistics about the pandemic and other data that can help the audience become aware of the current situation.

SUGGESTED CONTACTS

- **Sociedad Colombiana de Matemáticas**
Teléfono: (571) 2 216795
E-mail: scm@scm.org.co
- **Press Office of the National Institute of Health**
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HOW WE DO IT

This rumor bulletin is a product of the rumors collected and detected by the Colombia team as part of the Rooted in Trust project.

Between 15-30th of October, the team collected 35 rumors from social media sources commonly used in Nariño (15 from Facebook, 4 WhatsApp, 11 Twitter and 5 from other social media). The rumors discussed here were selected through a risk analysis that brings to the forefront the disinformation with the highest risk and potential impact on the communities of Ipiales and Tumaco, the target communities of the **Rooted in Trust** Colombia project.

FACTS

- The effects of COVID-19 are real: the first case of COVID-19 in Nariño was registered in Ipiales on March 24th. From then on the cases have increased to 23,102 with 780 people deceased (recorded on November 8th). This means that 3.37% of all COVID-19 cases resulted in death.
- The quarantine in the first months served to decrease the exponential speed of the pandemic. While in the beginning of the pandemic, every COVID-19 infected person infected an average of 2.5 other people in the 14 days they suffered the virus, in August that ratio decreased to 1.04 people testing positive for COVID-19.
- The occupancy of Intensive Care Units (ICUs) in Nariño has increased from 148 beds at the start of quarantine to 311 on October 31st.
- The increase in ICU capacity was necessary because even while maintaining the quarantine, occupancy of hospital beds in the ICU reached 81% and Nariño reached red alert (July 11th).
- To date, and with the increase of capacity, the occupancy of ICU beds is at 32.5% (November 2nd).
- The quarantine dramatically affected the economic situation of the department: 4,560 companies cancelled their commercial registration and 44% have suffered up to 50% losses in the past 7 months, and the informality index is at 47.6%.
- Moreover, the 74.3% of homes in Pasto suffered a decline in their economic situation in the last 7 months, according to a survey from the Social Pulse of the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE). These factors made the reopening necessary, but in no way do they indicate that the pandemic does not exist.

Sources:
Regional Commission of Competition
National Institute of Health
Departmental Institute of Health in Nariño
National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE)



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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



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Local voices. Global change.

We welcome your comments, questions, and suggestions to help local media produce reliable and accurate reports on COVID-19. **Contact: Natalia Cabrera,**
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