

The strategic collection of the rumors that circulate throughout the department of Nariño aims to provide humanitarian and public health organizations suggestions for integrating the migrant and LGBTIQ+ community perspectives and concerns into their communication activities. A survey performed in October and November 2020 through the Rooted in Trust project from Internews demonstrated that only 1 in every 10 migrants settled in or traveling through the department of Nariño believe they have access to all of the information they need.

WHAT DOES THE COMMUNITY SAY?

"Watch out, we don't trust those reports, they expect something, giving those absurd fraudulent reports."

Woman, Comment on Facebook, November 2020



The differences between the statistics from the Departmental Institute of Health in Nariño (IDSN) and the National Institute of Health (INS) about COVID-19 cases, both sick and recovered, have caused the people of Nariño not to trust in the reports presented at a regional level; distrust can affect people's perception of the reality of the pandemic as well as the credibility of health authorities.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

- Loss of credibility in the information provided by the authorities about the evolution of COVID-19 boosts the spread of conspiracy theories that deny that the pandemic exists and undermines the possibilities for reestablishing trust among the communities that humanitarian organizations work with.
- The distrust in statistics can stimulate a social rebellion against practices of self-care and prevention that are deemed the only efficient way to avoid massive infection of COVID-19, which is particularly risky in vulnerable communities or areas where access to health services is restricted.
- The disbelief and lack of faith in health institutions can influence the perception that communities have about medical professionals and humanitarian aid programs.

FACTS

- ✓ Up to November 22nd, 2020, the difference between the statistics from National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE) and the Ministry of Health in the number of deaths from COVID-19 was 6,602 (41,288 y 35,287 respectively). DANE explained that their statistic includes the number of deaths under investigation or suspected of having COVID-19 in the total number (6,602), but the Ministry of Health statistic does not. If these are excluded, the difference in the statistics is only .72%, as explained the Minister of Health, Fernando Ruíz.
- ✓ In only 24 hours, between November 10th and 11th, the IDSN reported an increase of 2,865 people recovered from COVID-19 in Nariño, who were counted as active patients with COVID-19 previously. This doesn't mean the data has been manipulated, but rather that it was not updated on the website and for that reason the statistics do not coincide with the statistics registered on the INS website.
- ✓ Nor has the INS been exempt from criticism and for this reason it has had to report that its daily data corresponds to preliminary reports of epidemiological surveillance regarding the virus, which are modified "as the territorial entities expand the work in the field" and the information is reported to health entities.

Sources: DANE, INS, IDSN y Ministry of Health

Patients recovered from COVID-19 in Nariño



Source: Graph based on statistics from the Departmental Institute of Health in Nariño (IDSN)

HOW CAN HUMANITARIAN ACTORS HELP?

- ➔ Maintaining the exchange of current information with institutions in the health sector and implementing and strengthening communication programs toward the community can have two useful results: contributing to the increasing levels of trust that the migrant population has toward the service providers and facilitating the necessary empathy between migrants and humanitarian organizations.
- ➔ Tending to the needs and worries expressed by members of the migrant community, and organizing debated and dialogues about topics that are important to them has been a useful strategy to achieve better acceptance of the presence and support of humanitarian actors, even though many of these migrants live in environments of distrust and a torn social fabric.
- ➔ Expanding assistance programs is fundamental to gain the trust of the migrant communities, and the communities in vulnerable conditions in general. Some studies have demonstrated that distrust establishes attitudinal barriers that interfere with the use of services and the full enjoyment of good health.



Any suggestions or information that might support or help government authorities and humanitarian agencies to manage disinformation are welcome. Please contact Rocio Lopez Íñigo: rlopezinigo@internews.org Global Humanitarian Liaison Officer, Rooted In Trust

RUMOR BULLETIN #4

RUMOR TRACKING UPDATE FOR HUMANITARIANS |
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Internews

The Rooted in Trust project at Internews, funded by USAID, aims to respond to the "infodemic" (misinformation, fake news, rumors, and excess information) that exacerbates discrimination and affects access to basic services and assistance for vulnerable communities in Nariño. It is particularly focused on the migrant and LGBTQI+ population in Ipiales and Tumaco, Colombia.

DID YOU KNOW...

... according to a survey done by Internews in Nariño, **2 of every 10 Venezuelan migrants** think that the vaccines will kill more people than COVID-19 itself and that the masks and physical distancing are not effective measures against COVID-19?



The survey was carried out by and with Venezuelan migrants with the support of the Rooted in Trust team and our partners, Fedemedios and Caribe Afirmativo. This community engagement approach allows us to reach 221 migrants between October and November 2020, 43% of whom identified as LGBTQI+ migrants.

People on the move also participate in collecting rumors about the COVID-19 pandemic that are circulating in their community. Between November 12th and 25th, our team identified 192 rumors, the majority of which from social media. The "Venga le Cuenta" bulletin addresses rumors that were selected following an analysis of the risk their spread poses to the target populations of our project.

WHAT DOES THE COMMUNITY SAY?

"Why all of this trash, the body develops antibodies to deal with the supposed pandemic. Genocidal pigs."

Man, Comment on Facebook, November 2020



Rumors about the effects of an eventual COVID-19 vaccine arise as quickly as the news and expectations about it. In this specific case, the rumor alludes to the inadequacy of the vaccine. The person speaking goes so far as to use the term 'genocide' to refer to the supposed extermination of anyone who receives the vaccine. In the last month, use of the concept of 'genocide' has been quite common to explain fear associated with the vaccine.

FACTS

- ✓ Currently, there are more than 150 possible vaccines in development around the world and this week, two laboratories, Moderna and Pfizer, announced that the effectiveness of their vaccines has reached 90%.
- ✓ At the time, expert health journalists and members of the scientific community warned about the lack of transparency in patient data and vaccine trials.
- ✓ On December 2nd, the Pfizer/BioNtech vaccine was approved for distribution in the United Kingdom, similar to the [Sputnik V](#), the vaccine that was developed in Russia and distributed in various countries.
- ✓ The extra rapid approval of the Pfizer vaccine was criticized by the epidemiologist, [Anthony Fauci](#), the main authority of public health in the United States, and for the European Union. Fauci apologized hours after.
- ✓ Despite the statistics, the Medicine and Sanitary Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) defended itself by saying that it has not authorized any vaccine in the United Kingdom if it did not comply with the safety, quality and effectiveness standards. This means that according to MHRA, the vaccine has passed all the required phases.
- ✓ In Colombia, the government has ensured that the vaccine will be available during the first quarter of 2021, and has received approval from a bill that exonerates pharmaceutical companies from being responsible for any side effects from the COVID-19 vaccine. The Colombian Public Health Association has warned about the unconstitutionality of this ruling. Similar standards are being approved in the rest of the world.

Sources:
Ministry of Health, Colombian Association of Public Health,
Local Media

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

- Since January 2019, World Health Organization (WHO) included the rejection of vaccines as one of 10 principles threatening health worldwide.
- The vaccines save between 2 and 3 million lives a year, and if universalized, it would save an additional 1.5 million.
- Beyond the evident health benefits, the vaccination programs have indirect economic and social benefits, like cognitive development, educational achievement and labor productivity, among others.
- In the case of COVID-19, the proliferation of news and the accelerated search for a vaccine has created a political and ideological debate that has confronted individual rights with public health and has led to the appearance of disinformation campaigns, widespread fears and the consequent loss of trust in health services.
- If one does not understand and address the issue of trust, when the COVID-19 vaccine arrives, it may be too late to achieve public and mass acceptance of it.

HOW CAN HUMANITARIAN ACTORS HELP?

- ➔ To avoid the massive application of the COVID-19 vaccine from stalling before it is available, concerted efforts are needed among health sector institutions, national, regional, and local governments, humanitarian actors, and civil society to explain what is known and what is not known about the vaccines that have been approved, their benefits and risks. The participation of local communities, including migrants, is crucial in these programs.
- ➔ Being transparent in the management of information and consistently updating the communities benefiting from humanitarian assistance on the evolution, development, benefits and evaluations of COVID-19 vaccines could lead to the generation of positive expectations and greater credibility towards scientific advances.
- ➔ Addressing popular doubts, fears, and beliefs with respect can support the creation of an assertive discussion where the community can express themselves and receive information about the vaccine when it is distributed.