

RUMOR BULLETIN #4

RUMOR TRACKING UPDATE FOR JOURNALISTS #4 | DECEMBER 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 DOES THE COMMUNITY SAY?

Woman,
Comment on Facebook,
November 2020

ARE THE STATISTICS CORRECT?

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



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.

FACTS

- While the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE) reported that until November 22nd, 2020 there were 41,288 deaths from COVID-19 in Colombia, the Ministry of Health only reported 35,287 deaths. Despite the suspicion surrounding this fact, DANE indicates that the differences result because 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 one excludes the deaths categorized as suspected patient cases, the difference in the statistics is only .72%, as explained the Minister of Health, Fernando Ruíz.
- Between the 10th and 11th of November, IDSN increased their statistics for the number of people recovered from COVID-19 in the department by 2,865, who were listed as active patients with COVID-19 before. This doesn't mean the data has been manipulated, but rather that it was not updated on the website. The INS statistics were up to date.

Recovered from COVID-19 Departament of Nariño	
Nov 10. 2020	Nov 11. 2020
18,459	21,324

Difference: 2,865

Sources:
Infografía IDSN 10 de noviembre 2020.
Infografía IDSN 11 de noviembre 2020.

- On their part, the INS has noted that the data presented in the daily reports are preliminary epidemiological monitoring of the COVID-19 virus, and are modified "specifically for the local authorities to promote their work in the field" and report information to health workers.

Sources:
DANE
INS
Ministry of Health
IDSN

TIPS FOR JOURNALISTS

- ✓ The collection, organization, processing, analysis and interpretation of data about people affected by COVID-19 can help deduce and project trends of the disease. **Investigate the tables provided by the INS** to review specific cases.
- ✓ Consult the clarifying notices presented by health institutions in order to explain to your audience why there may have been a change in the statistics in their reports.
- ✓ **Analyze the information:** according to the Observatory of the COVID-19 Infodemic from the Bruno Kessler Foundation, the Latin America region is more greatly affected by misinformation than the rest of the world. In Colombia we publish an average of 27,757 tweets every day about COVID-19, 38.61% of which originate from false accounts.



27,757

Tweets
per day



0.336

Index of
risk



63.88%

Verified
Counts



38.61%

False
Counts

Source: <https://covid19obs.fb.k.eu/#/>

SUGGESTED CONTACTS

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THE HUMANIZATION OF REPORTING

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

"Gabo changes function". Change 16, May 1996.

WHAT DOES THE COMMUNITY SAY?

Man
Comment on Facebook,
November 2020

DISTRUST IN THE VACCINES

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



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.

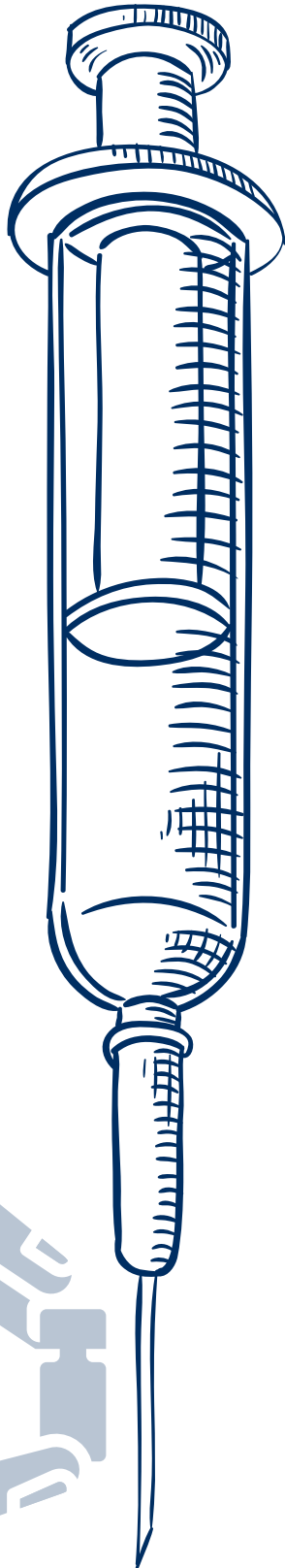
DID YOU KNOW...?

...according to an Internews survey in Nariño, 2 out of every 10 Venezuelan migrants believe that the vaccine will kill more people than COVID-19 itself and that masks and physical distancing are not effective measures against COVID-19? The survey was carried out by and with Venezuelan migrants with the help 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.

FACTS

- ➔ A vaccine is any preparation destined to generate immunity against a disease and stimulate the production of antibodies.
- ➔ 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%.
- ➔ The side effects of the vaccine should be light and temporary, such as pain in the arm or a light fever. More serious side effects may occur in extremely rare circumstances.
- ➔ The [Moderna, Pfizer/BioNtech y Oxford/AstraZeneca](#) vaccines are all in Phase III of development, as well as [Sputnik V](#), a vaccine developed in Russia that will be distributed in various countries.
- ➔ The United Kingdom has become the first country to approve the Pfizer vaccine, with the objective of beginning vaccination, the scientific community reminds us that these clinical trials were carried out with healthy people, rarely including patients. In fact, in the Pfizer case, they have not included any patients, or at least they haven't revealed any to the public.
- ➔ 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, on their Twitter account, that exonerating pharmaceutical companies of civil responsibility or penalty is potentially unconstitutional and inappropriate for the State and public health of Colombians. Similar standards are being approved in the rest of the world.

Sources:
World Health Organization (WHO)
Local media



TIPS FOR JOURNALISTS

- ✓ The term genocide refers to a legal category that defines systematic extermination of a deliberate social group for reasons of race, politics, or religion. It is not only wrong to suggest that a vaccine could cause an extermination, but also irresponsible to associate this concept to a scientific development that aims to avoid a higher rate of infections and death.
- ✓ It is necessary to understand the development and the trials that are part of the production of the vaccine. This includes a review of the literature and the existing data. When a vaccine comes on the market, thousands of people will have already tested it in a controlled environment. For that reason, even though there may be exceptions, new medicines (including vaccines) are always considered more safe than older medicines.
- ✓ Be careful not to only base your story on one report of an adverse reaction to the vaccine. It is all about what the experts call "signals" that indicate a need for further research. Inform the audience about what regulatory entities define as "post-marketing surveillance" which includes drug surveillance, a type of surveillance that the WHO defines as "science and activities related to the detection, evaluation, comprehension and prevention of the side effects or any issue related to the drug."
- ✓ Even if the news about the research, studies, development, and approval of the COVID-19 vaccine changes daily and causes fear or accelerated optimism, what is certain is that no vaccine will arrive in Colombia before the first quarter of 2021. For now we hope that the doubts the scientific community has begun to express have been resolved by the Expert Committee of the WHO, which is in charge with establishing recommendations and detailed directives regarding the manufacturing, licensing, and control of the vaccines and other developments in the field of medicine. Remember the importance of obtaining truthful information from accredited health channels that counteract the thoughts and ideological beliefs that are not supported by science.

SUGGESTED CONTACTS

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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



Internews
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, Media Liaison Officer of the Rooted in Trust project, Colombia: ncabrerajimenez@internews.org