



## Internews

The *Rooted in Trust* project aims to disrupt and mitigate the flow of misleading, inaccurate or malignant information to vulnerable populations affected by humanitarian crises during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Mali, the *Rooted In Trust* project focuses on listening to and collecting rumors about the virus and the COVID-19 response among displaced populations in the District of Bamako and the regions of Sikasso, Segou, Mopti, and Timbuktu.

## FACTS

- "The hydroalcoholic gel is designed only for the hands: contact with mucous membranes, especially the eyes, is to be avoided", Dr. Isabelle Gallay, dermatologist in Dijon (France) and Vice-President of the SNDV (Syndicat National de Dermatologie Vénérologie).
- To wash your hands, the WHO recommends soap when water is available; hydroalcoholic gel should remain an option of last resort since its misuse can be aggressive for the skin: the product contains alcohol.
- According to the French National Agency for the Safety of Medicines and Health Products ANSM, hand washing with soap should always be carried out with soap, preferably liquid, with a minimum washing time of 30 seconds.
- The correct technique for using the hydroalcoholic gel is to rub the palms of the hands, the backs of the hands, fingers, nails and wrists with a pressure of antibacterial solution, 3 to 4 times a day.
- According to dermatologist Dr Isabelle Gallay, the alcohol in the product reacts with UV rays and can cause burns to sun-exposed skin.
- In June 2020, 200 health professionals and scientists from 29 countries and 9 European health organizations alerted consumers to the danger of certain antibacterial gels. The alert was given through an article entitled "Manifesto of Florence" which was published in the scientific journal "Environmental Health Perspectives".

## WHAT ARE PEOPLE SAYING

Radio listener in Goundam

"I have learned that there are hydroalcoholic gels that cause skin problems when used. We are also wary of masks".

DANGER OF HYDRO ALCOHOLIC GELS

The hydro-alcoholic gel has been criticized several times since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic. Preconceived ideas about the product and its effects are not unfounded because, it must be acknowledged, some people with sensitive skin have encountered skin problems, including burns, following its use. However, the antibacterial solution is an inexpensive and very practical alternative anywhere, especially when there is no water nearby, for hand disinfection.

In the midst of the COVID-19 crisis, it is not advisable for the population to be wary of the hydro-alcoholic gels that are essential to protect themselves against the virus. Instead, it will be interesting to remind or educate the public about proper techniques for using this product to prevent and reduce its effects.

## TIPS TO THE MEDIA

- **Get in touch** with the people in charge of the National Health Laboratory of Mali on the standards to be respected in the production of hydroalcoholic gels.
- Since there are Malian companies that produce these antibacterial solutions locally, it will be useful to **identify them and ask them** about the composition of their products.
- **Produce reports** on popular hydroalcoholic gels sold in supermarkets or superstores, while highlighting the notices on these different products. You will be able to question the health authorities on the existence of these antibacterial solutions that are contraband or of poor quality.
- The media can **produce audio and video spots** to talk about good techniques and the responsible use of hydroalcoholic gel.

## SUGGESTED CONTACTS

- **Pr. Benoit Yaranga Koumaré** / General Director of the National Health Laboratory. Tel: +223 66 75 94 75; e-mail: bkoumare@yahoo.fr
- **Pr. Akory Ag Iknane** / National Coordinator of COVID-19 in Mali. Tel: +223 70 38 30 30; e-mail: akory.agiknane@gmail.com

## PRINCIPLES OF JOURNALISM

"The accuracy and effectiveness of the messages journalists convey can make the difference between life and death," **Gabriella Stern, WHO Director of Communications.**

## WHAT ARE PEOPLE SAYING

Male, Mopti IDP camp

*"An acquaintance told me that inhaling the smoke produced by sugar poured over embers of fire was an effective remedy."*

TRADITIONAL REMEDY

Whether on social networks or in casual discussions between people, several drugs have been cited as potential treatments for COVID-19. Continuing to make people, especially IDPs, believe that aspirin or inhaling the smoke from sugar poured over embers would treat COVID-19, means putting people in danger: they will no longer want to take coronavirus disease seriously and will no longer protect themselves against it because they will think that a cure already exists, which is not true.



## FAITS

- According to the Secretary General of the order of pharmacists of Mali, Ousmane Bakary Coulibaly, when sugar is poured over embers of fire, the smoke that is released is carbon dioxide.
- "If the smoke given off by sugar poured over embers can cure COVID-19, smokers would be spared from this virus. And yet, they develop the most serious forms of the disease," Dr. Aboubacar Sidiki Dramé / Medical biologist, COVID focal point at Mali Hospital.
- Smoking is known to be a risk factor for many respiratory infections and it aggravates respiratory diseases. Public health experts gathered by WHO on April 29, 2020 to review the studies concluded that smokers were more likely to contract a severe form of COVID-19 than non-smokers.

## TIPS TO THE MEDIA

- **Interview COVID-19 focal points** in Mali or the national disease coordinator in the country on the drugs used to treat some of the symptoms of COVID-19.
- If possible, **create fact-checking programs** to deal with rumors on a regular basis, especially those related to COVID-19.
- **Interview Malian health specialists** to talk about the danger of inhaling the smoke from sugar poured over embers of fire.
- Since the practice of inhaling the smoke from sugar poured over embers is a habit among Malians, health journalists can also **produce microprograms** to raise awareness of this phenomenon.
- **Invite**, through your various productions on the pandemic, national and international health authorities to intensify information and awareness campaigns on coronavirus disease.
- **Organize special talk-shows** with health workers and IDPs to learn about their beliefs on the coronavirus. With the help of the resource persons present on the talk-show, **provide answers** to rumors.

## PRINCIPLES OF JOURNALISM

*"By losing its ethical principles, journalism loses its fundamental values, its credibility, its raison d'être. How can it be preserved? Regulating its ethics through new laws runs the risk of censorship. Only a voluntary commitment to ethics can restore journalism to its former glory," - UNESCO.*

## SUGGESTED CONTACTS

- **Aboubacar Sidiki Dramé** / Medical biologist, COVID focal point at the Mali hospital. Tel: +223 73 10 98 08; e-mail: boubacar\_drame@hotmail.com
- **Ousmane Bakary Coulibaly** / Secretary General of the Order of Pharmacists of Mali. Tel: +223 76 76 38 48; e-mail: ousmanecoul2002@yahoo.fr

We welcome your comments and suggestions to help local media produce reliable information and reporting on COVID-19. Please contact **Maimouna Sidibe**, Media Liaison Officer, Rooted In Trust, Mali at msidibe@internews.org.

