

Rooted in Trust

The Problem

The COVID-19 pandemic has created chaos and confusion around the world and put vulnerable communities in even more danger. Right now, accurate and relevant information about COVID-19 prevention, vaccines and new strains is imperative to protect the lives of the communities around the world that are already suffering from marginalization, displacement and insecurity.

Rooted in Trust is a global pandemic information response program countering the unprecedented scale and speed of the spread of rumors and misinformation. This second phase of the project will focus on Lebanon, Mali, Colombia, Sudan, Brazil, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, South Sudan and Zimbabwe.

Leveraging lessons learned from the first phase of the project, proven methodologies, and risk communication and community engagement strategies, Rooted in Trust will continue to strengthen the local capacity of humanitarians, media, and health communicators to ensure their COVID-19 information work is shaped by and responsive to the needs of the vulnerable communities across these nine countries.

Highlights So Far

Rooted in Trust has tracked more than **19,000 rumors** about the virus across **14+ languages globally** and **reached over 81 million people** with **accurate** and **relevant information** to combat them.

In response to the unique rumors sourced from each country context, the project has produced a total of over **130 rumor bulletins, 500 radio broadcasts, and 480 other media stories** to connect communities directly with timely and accurate COVID-19 information.

Through a series of training opportunities, events, peer-to-peer networks and small grants, the Rooted in Trust project has supported **550 local media organizations** to strengthen their capacity for health journalism.

Rooted in Trust collected feedback from direct conversations with almost **350,000 people** during **4,670 listening groups** where community members explained their worries and fears about topics such as **COVID-19, vaccines, and access to healthcare**.

Over 2,400 survey respondents, 230 qualitative interviews and 130 focus groups fed into Information Ecosystem Assessments in seven countries to support effective communication by local actors using the communities preferred platforms.

“Thanks to radio Salam Watandar for the broadcast of these COVID-19 information packages. I regularly share them with my friends and relatives who live in Takhar province. The people of Takhar don’t believe in the second wave of COVID-19 and they do not observe the health measures, but I still share this information with them so that they take it seriously.”

– Female participant, Salam Watandar WhatsApp Group

How does Rooted in Trust do it?

Research the context

Who is providing accurate COVID-19 information? Can people access it and if so, how do they interact with it? What barriers exist that block people from information they need? What factors influence trust and the impact of information? These questions are all part of an Information Ecosystem Assessment (IEA) done in partnership with local information providers in the community. The IEA is a mapping exercise that helps us understand how misinformation travels through a particular context, and design projects to effectively counter it. Rooted in Trust also generates research looking at the big issues impacting effective Risk Communication and the drivers of health-related misinformation.

Tracking Misinformation

Once there is a map of how information flows through the community, our partners can begin collecting, managing, and addressing misinformation from the source. Through a variety of conversations with the community, social media listening, feedback from humanitarians and local media outlets, Rooted in Trust and its partners track questions, concerns, and rumors in a database. This Rumor Tracking methodology allows us to analyze community feedback to understand and respond to the hopes, fears, questions and concerns that often propel the spread of misinformation. Rumor analysis is presented in accessible products designed to support different stakeholders such as humanitarian and health communicators, local media and the community itself.

Feedback Loops

The most important step of the process is to close the feedback loop by providing factual information delivered with empathy by our local trusted partners, that responds to actual - rather than perceived - questions and concerns in the community. Informed by the IEAs and our local partners, this engagement is done through preferred platforms, languages, and trusted messengers to reach the most vulnerable groups who face compounding barriers in accessing good quality information.

Community Engagement

In-person listening groups, events, and dialogues with the community members are the cornerstone of this approach. Rooted in Trust strengthens the relationship between the communities at risk and those offering services and information to them. This is done by partnering with trusted local organizations and media outlets to build capacity and share knowledge.

Media as key actors of the response

Local media play a critical role in understanding and responding to questions and concerns about the pandemic, vaccines, and the impacts on their lives. However, in this rapidly evolving health crisis, many local journalists struggle to access the latest scientific information in local languages and accessible formats. We support local information first responders to have access to accurate information, relevant skills and training, and to build effective connections between local media and humanitarian and health communicators.

