In this issue, we dig deeper on implications of declining trust towards institutions and the multiple crisis that the Bangsamoro Region faces and provide resources and suggestions on what humanitarians can do.

3 concerns from the ground are featured this week.
People questioned the implementation of social distancing measures in public transportation in Marawi City. Allegations of corruption were also made on the process of hiring contact tracers in Lanao del Sur. While residents of Cotabato City claimed they need bulletproof vests, not face shields, as more people are reported to be killed from senseless violence than from COVID-19.

As of November 10, 2020, there are a total of 2,148 cases in BARMM. Maguindanao has 296 active cases, the highest in the region. Lanao del Sur, including Marawi City, will be under General Community Quarantine from November 1-30, 2020, while the rest of the region will remain under Modified General Community Quarantine.

Salig Bangsamoro (Trust Bangsamoro) is Rooted in Trust Philippines' biweekly rumor bulletin for humanitarians. Rooted in Trust is a global and local humanitarian response run by Internews to fight the spread of rumors on COVID-19. In the Philippines, the focus is on the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

COVID-19 SITUATION IN BARMM

How we do it: The rumors and concerns in this bulletin were collected by the Coalition of Moro Youth Movement, a consortium of Moro youth groups advocating for peace and inclusive development in BARMM, and the Initiatives for Dialogue and Empowerment through Alternative Legal Services (IDEALS), a non-profit organization helping in the legal and technical needs of marginalized, disempowered and vulnerable groups.

There were 44 feedback data collected from Oct 16-30, 2020 from various platforms (Facebook, Twitter, posts, comments, and stories). After rigorous Social Media Influence Mapping, we can better understand the pages, groups, and platforms where conversations about the pandemic are likely to happen. The selection was based on a risk assessment matrix that accounts for the frequency of the scenario or social media engagements and its potential impact on the community.

Why Rumors?

Rumors and misinformation fill a void. They reflect perceptions, information gaps, and needs of the community. It does not limit itself to what we acknowledge explicitly as a rumor, but could come in the form of questions, criticism, complaints, comments, wishes, and even jokes. It is key to acknowledge that behind a rumor there is often a question that needs answering and at times also a grain of truth.

We take a qualitative approach to rumor tracking, collecting smaller numbers of quality rumors that give us an insight into community questions, trust and fears or anxieties. By looking at rumors, we can improve and strengthen public health messaging and combat misinformation that might impact humanitarian initiatives.

Medium risk rumors have the potential to be believed among larger community with potentially moderate negative impacts to community or individual's health well-being, or safety.
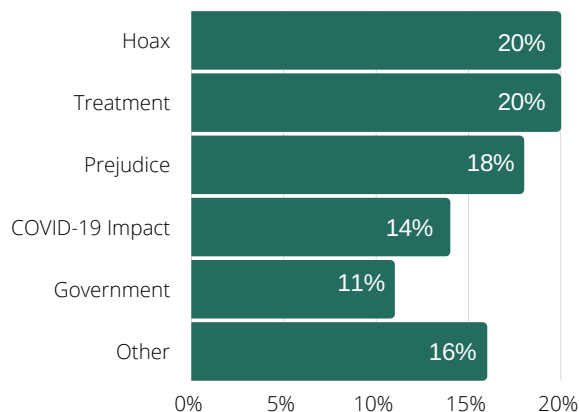
Low risk rumors are either unlikely to be believed among the community or with limited negative impacts to community or individual's health, well-being, or safety or to the pandemic response.

High risk rumors are very likely to be believed among the larger community with potentially severe negative impacts resulting in serious harm to an individual or group including inciting violence or creating widespread fear and panic
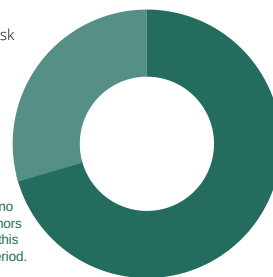
Risk is based on a range of factors, which includes cultural relevancy, timing, online engagement, the believability of a rumor and the potential negative impact a rumor may have on the health, well-being, and safety of local communities or service providers.

Rumors Collected by Theme (October 16-30, 2020)
% Share to Total Collected Rumors

Theme	%
Hoax	20%
Treatment	20%
Prejudice	18%
COVID-19 Impact	14%
Government	11%
Other	16%

Medium Risk 29.5%

There were no high risk rumors identified in this two week period.

Low Risk 70.5%

In our previous issues, we have identified similar rumors that were related to allegations of corruption, selective treatment, and reliability of COVID-19 testing.
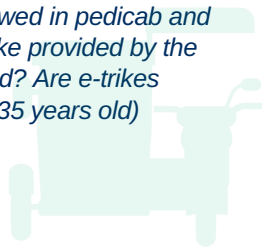
The low-risk rumors are mostly comprised of commentary on various treatments and cures for COVID-19 ranging from home remedies to traditional medicines with low frequency of online engagements. While medium risk rumors featured in this issue have moderate impact on health seeking behaviors given their relevance to community and their high online engagements.

1 what are people saying?

NO SOCIAL DISTANCING IN GOVERNMENT'S "LIBRENG SAKAY" PROGRAM

"How come two passengers are not allowed in pedicab and tricycles while in the Libreng Sakay e-trike provided by the government, passengers are jam-packed? Are e-trikes exempted from the virus?" (Female, 26-35 years old)

Rumor Risk Level: Medium

Platform: Facebook	Reactions: 495
Comments: 221	Shares: 1.4K

2 what are people saying?

CORRUPTION ALLEGATIONS ON HIRING OF CONTACT TRACERS

"Only those who are connected to local officials are hired as contact tracers. It is so unfair! I was informed it was an order from the mayor. Why people who don't have any connections can be easily removed from the list of candidates, despite being eligible and going through the right process?"

Rumor Risk Level: Medium

Platform: Facebook	Reactions: 655
Comments: 47	Shares: 1K

These two claims show growing frustration of people regarding the credibility of the COVID-19 response and government processes. While this bulletin does not have the resources to verify these two rumors, the impact of this misinformation and why the community may be inclined to believe this information is important.

The Libreng Sakay which started last October 5 in Lanao del Sur aims to assist the medical frontliners and authorized persons outside their homes in their everyday work. Under current quarantine measures, social distancing is mandated in any transport vehicle, which includes e-trikes. Meanwhile, the government has been proactive in hiring of 1,480 contact tracers for the BARMM region, which has become a popular job opportunity in a time where stable income is difficult.

We know that rumors that trigger a strong emotion (fear, anger, joy) spread faster than those that don't and hence have the potential to cause greater damage to trust and compliance. Since these concerns are personal to the community and with growing anxieties and lockdown fatigue, these allegations may lead to serious damage, affecting the credibility of the whole COVID-19 response. These also add to suspicions that COVID-19 measures are not well implemented and that the motivation is not health at all. Right before the pandemic started, a study showed that faith in governments, media, businesses, and non-government organizations have eroded, especially among the mass population who have experienced income inequality.

This has worsened during the pandemic, with more Filipinos saying their quality of life has declined and with 70% doubting government information on COVID-19. When people do not have trustworthy sources of information, misinformation and disinformation spread like wildfire.

Pandemics are stressful and people are frustrated. Measures, albeit necessary, have been hard on people, especially in terms of livelihood and mental health. It is inevitable for people to highlight mistakes, long-time issues of the government, and the need for good governance. The declining credibility of the government and its response to COVID-19 is worrying. This will affect the efficacy of and compliance with measures to prevent COVID-19. Potentially, this mistrust could also impact the work of individuals, such as doctors and contact tracers, and institutions, such as humanitarian and civil society organizations.

Lastly, this poses long-lasting negative implications towards social and economic recovery, social cohesion, and political stability, especially in the context of the BARMM region, which is under a transitional government. Rebuilding trust is key to addressing the pandemic, transitioning towards recovery, and development in the region.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

- Fill the information gap by developing messages that respond to unanswered questions, misinformation, and feedback being raised by communities.
- Strong public communication is key to combating disinformation and gaining public trust. Help communities understand rationale for government guidelines and strategies to address COVID-19. A key area where the government needs support is in translating and sharing information.
- Brief local and regional governments on feedback collected and discuss ways these concerns can be addressed to further build trust towards public institutions and their health response.
- Transparency, stakeholder participation, and other open governance principles are important in fostering public trust. Governments should be transparent about guidelines and processes for COVID-19 programs and policies, such as the hiring process for contact tracers, and communicate these effectively to the public.

- Promote dialogues with government and community partners; which is also in line with collective approaches to community engagement.
- Rethink community activities and approaches to minimize anxieties and stressors, such as promoting messages that help people take care of their mental health.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

3 what are people saying?

BULLET PROOF AND NOT FACE SHIELD

"More people are being killed not by COVID-19 in Cotabato. What people need is bullet proof than face shield to protect themselves." (Male, 19-25 years old)

Rumor Risk Level: Medium
Platform: Facebook   Reactions: 256
Comments: 42   Shares: 666

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

This is a commentary rather than a rumor, but it reflects people's perspectives of how the new normal is different for everyone and for some, crimes and conflict are more imminent threats than COVID-19. There is no single answer to this comment but its context and impact to the community is important to address.

Since the start of the pandemic, peace and order crimes in BARMM have dropped. From 738 total crime incidents in January to March, it went down to 624 in April to June and to 619 in July to September. However, senseless violence continues to perpetuate in communities despite lockdown measures. In Cotabato City, a store supervisor was shot dead in front of her workplace and a grenade explosion was reported in a residential area just six days after. In response, the Bangsamoro Regional Police has deployed 300 more personnel in Cotabato City to strengthen law enforcement operations. For decades, the communities in Mindanao have been facing threats from several armed groups that negatively impact the peace and order situation in the region. Despite calls for a global ceasefire initiative, this has not translated to reductions in violence.

With many focused on addressing the pandemic, conflict risks may emerge from COVID-19 response and peace processes and local conflict resolution may suffer. The economic crisis caused by the pandemic may give opportunities for armed groups to tighten their grip over influence and use the COVID-19 response, government grievances, and exacerbating inequalities as a pretext. Fear and anxieties may also lead to a rise in COVID-19 hate speech and fan the flames of existing issues.

Today, many families are trapped between threats of COVID-19 and conflict. Affected populations may overlook the invisible COVID-19 virus and minimum health standards to prioritize threats that they have been experiencing for decades, which may lead to rise in COVID-19 cases. Overall, COVID-19 is likely to worsen existing causes of conflict and undermine social and economic resilience.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

- Recognize people's anxieties, provide a space to listen to concerns and feedback, and ensure communities are consulted on matters that affect them.
- COVID-19 advice needs to fit changing community contexts. This includes looking into different approaches to accessing COVID-19 testing and treatment to make communities feel safe and reinforcing localized messaging on minimum health standards during disasters.
- Government and humanitarian COVID-19 response needs to be inclusive, conflict-sensitive, and encompass different needs of vulnerable groups experiencing multiple crisis.
- Be alert for possible rise of COVID-19 hate speech and be prepared to address them.

WANT MORE?

We've gathered good practices and relevant resources for further reading.

Community insights on COVID-19
The Asia Pacific RCCE Working Group conducts a study to understand people's insights and achieve a community-driven COVID-19 response.

Recommendations from the survey include moving away from blanket messaging that may contribute to "messaging fatigue," and focusing on unanswered questions from the community and information gaps. *This dashboard shows the survey results.*

We Are Subjects, no Objects in Health: Communities Taking Action on COVID-19
EQUINET shares 42 case studies on people-centered, participatory forms of community engagement in responding to COVID-19. It highlights that the response to COVID-19 "does not need to generate fear and coercion. It can be inclusive, creative, equitable and participatory... co-production and co-determination with affected communities are not an optional 'add-on' to COVID-19 responses. They are fundamental to a successful response."

COVID-19 and Conflict Sensitivity
The World Food Program shares 10 potential conflict risks associated with COVID-19 response and provides an operational tool to analyze and mitigate these risks and adapt programming to changing contexts.

CONNECT WITH US!

Contribute to Salig Bangsamoro Rumor Collection. Join the Mindanao Rumor Management Platform Meeting, every 2nd and 4th Thursday, via Zoom. Have you spotted a COVID-19 rumor? **SUBMIT IT HERE**.Your feedback and suggestions can help humanitarians and organizations address COVID-19 rumors and misinformation. **Please contact Leanne Lagman** (Humanitarian Liaison Officer) at ylagman@internews.org