

# RUMOR BULLETIN #1

RUMOR TRACKING UPDATE FOR JOURNALISTS | OCTOBER 2020



Internews

Internews' **Rooted in Trust** project, funded by USAID, seeks to respond to the "infodemic" (misinformation, fake news, rumors, and over-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 PEOPLE ARE SAYING

Male  
From Twitter, April 2020

"Those venecos (pejorative term for Venezuelans) are coming on the trails between Colombia and Ecuador, weak, malnourished and worm infested... And who knows if they are infected. 28 cases in Nariño, a few days ago there were only 7."

**XENOPHOBIA AGAINST VENEZUELAN MIGRANTS DUE TO INCREASES IN COVID-19 CASES**

The arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic and the fear of massive infections has brought with it an increase in discriminatory attitudes and comments against Venezuelan migrants in Ipiales. This rising xenophobia was observed through the increase in WhatsApp chains with hateful messages towards migrants as well as instances of violent attacks on migrant shelters reported in July.

## REPORTING TIPS

- **Remind** your audiences that the coronavirus does not distinguish nationality or origin.
- **Highlight** in your reports that immigration status is not a cause of infection.
- **Highlight** the importance of biosecurity measures. According to recent studies, COVID-19 is transmitted by contact with infected people and can remain on some surfaces for up to 28 days.
- **Be careful** with the use of certain words that can deepen the stigmatization and negative stereotypes against migrants and that can reinforce hate speech against foreign populations.
- **Promote** discourses of inclusion. Focus on positive stories. How do foreigners contribute to the development of the department of Nariño? Behind each migrant family there is a story of improvement that you can highlight.
- **Focus** on the measures being taken by local and national authorities and humanitarian organizations to assist the migrant population during the pandemic
- If there are people of other nationalities involved in crimes, **avoid generalizing**, ask yourself: why is it important to mention immigration status in this case?

## FACTS

- The crisis in Venezuela has caused one of the largest exoduses in recent history. The number of Venezuelans abroad went from less than half a million in 2005 to 4 million in 2019.
- As of April 2020, there were almost 1,800,000 Venezuelans in the country. About 4,800 migrants are settled in Ipiales.
- Is it estimated that since the beginning of the pandemic, every day 100 people cross the border between Colombia and Ecuador through 37 irregular crossing points.
- Six out of 10 migrants are in an irregular condition, making it difficult for them to access health services.
- There is no evidence to prove that coronavirus cases in Nariño increased with the arrival of migrants.
- The closure of the border left hundreds of migrants "trapped" in Ipiales.
- Migrants in Ipiales and Tumaco continue to be victims of human trafficking, forced labor, and sexual exploitation.
- The Ipiales Health Secretariat conducts constant screenings of migrant shelters. The organization Médecins du Monde is in charge of the care of migrants with symptoms of the disease.

Sources:  
International Organization for Migration (IOM)  
Migration Colombia  
Ipiales Health Secretariat

## SUGGESTED CONTACTS

- **Gobernación de Nariño**  
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## PRINCIPLES OF JOURNALISM

Rigor is the fundamental pillar of good journalism, and its main principle is to investigate all versions of a subject and consult all sources. Journalists should always strive for accuracy, provide all relevant news and facts, and make sure to verify information. If information cannot be corroborated, it is better not to include it or at the very least to express that reservation in your articles.



## WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

Male

From Twitter, September 2020

"Tumaco, Nariño has a very high incidence of dengue. In Tumaco, Nariño, infections and deaths from Covid have stagnated."

In September, a message circulated on Twitter, suggesting that in the municipality of Tumaco (Nariño) cases of COVID-19 stagnated due to a supposed immunity coming from antibodies generated by the human body in places affected by dengue.

The tweet was based on a study by Miguel Nicolelis, a professor at Duke University, who analyzed the geographical distribution of coronavirus and dengue cases in some areas of Brazil, and concluded that the sites with fewer cases and slower growth of the disease correlate with places that had also experienced severe dengue outbreaks between 2019 and 2020.

DENGUE CASES IN TUMACO GENERATE IMMUNITY AGAINST COVID-19

## REPORTING TIPS

- **Report** on the analysis of the Ministry of Health of Colombia, according to which there is no relationship between the confirmed numbers of dengue cases and COVID - 19.
- **State** specific facts. Use the figures available from the National Institute of Health, which show that in Tumaco, and in general in Nariño, dengue has not had an increase or decrease in cases of COVID-19.
- **Avoid** replicating information from social media about the association between the "quebrantahuesos" (local term for dengue) or dengue and the coronavirus. They are two different diseases.
- **Consult** with experts, both from the scientific community and from the health area. Make the difference between the two diseases known, and provide information that allows your audience to distinguish between the symptoms of COVID - 19 and the bite of the mosquito that causes dengue.
- **Remember** that the verified information must reach the residents of Nariño in the simplest way possible. Avoid using complicated terms, try to explain the meanings of scientific terms.

## SUGGESTED CONTACTS

- **Pan American Health Organization**  
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- **Press Office of the Ministry of Health**  
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## HOW WE DO IT



This rumor bulletin is a product of the rumors collected and detected by the Colombia team as part of the Rooted in Trust project.

In the period between April and October 2020, the team collected 117 rumors from social media sources commonly used in Nariño (88 from Facebook, 16 WhatsApp, 10 Twitter y 3 from other social media). The rumors discussed here were selected through a risk analysis that brings to the forefront the disinformation with the highest risk and potential impact on the communities of Ipiales and Tumaco, which are the target communities of the **Rooted in Trust** Colombia project.

## FACTS

- In 2019, 565 cases of dengue were registered in Nariño. By October 11, 2020, an additional 398 cases were recorded.
- By the same date, 19,754 cases of coronavirus had been confirmed in the department (10% of them in Tumaco), which means that for each case of dengue there have been 50 cases of COVID-19. This allows us to infer that the suggested immunity in the Brazilian study it is not applicable to the reality of Nariño.
- The fact that there are municipalities with a history of dengue that have not submitted reports of coronavirus cases may be due to the mitigation and isolation measures established since the beginning of the pandemic, which could have delayed the arrival of the virus and diminished its spread.

Sources:  
National Institute of Health of Colombia (INS)  
Ministry of Health

## PRINCIPLES OF JOURNALISM

Journalists must be independent voices, not act, formally or informally, on behalf of specific interests, be they political, business or cultural. They must make clear to their editors - or audience - any political, financial, or other personal information that may constitute a conflict of interest.



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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: [ncabrera@internews.org](mailto:ncabrera@internews.org)

