



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.

Feedback collection is done in the field with AMSODE field workers and volunteers, through community radio stations and by monitoring various information platforms and sites (Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, publications, commentaries, stories, etc.).

During the period from October 28 to November 10, 2020, we collected 63 rumors of which 16 were classified as high risk, 30 as medium risk and 17 as low risk. In addition, 39 of these rumours came from Facebook, 16 from Twitter, 4 from websites, 1 from WhatsApp, 1 from YouTube, 1 from a telephone interview and 1 from face-to-face discussions.

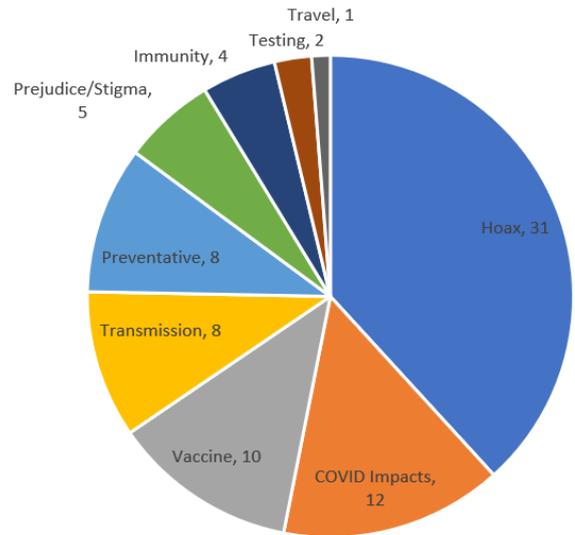
COVID-19 SITUATION IN MALI

During the week of November 2-8, 2020, 141 cases of COVID-19 and 1 death were recorded in Mali. Nine regions and 38 health districts have been affected by the pandemic to date.

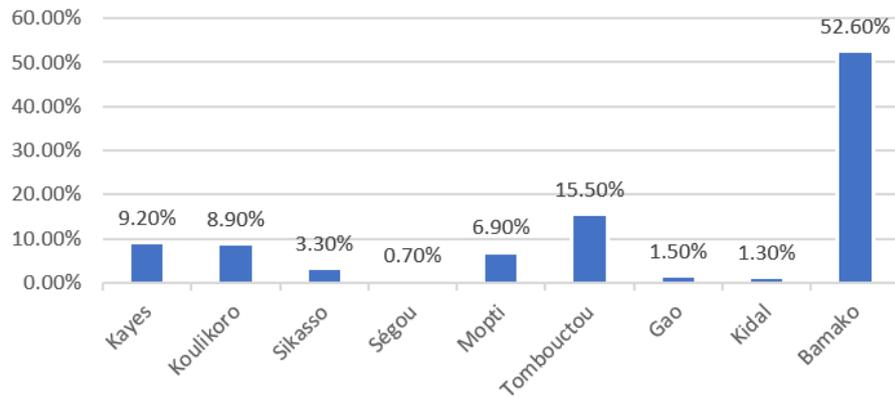
The cumulative number of confirmed cases since the beginning of the epidemic is 3,706, including 144 imported cases. The cumulative number of cures is 2,828, representing a cure rate of 76.3%. Among the confirmed positive cases, 70% are men and 30% are women.

The age group most affected by the pandemic is the 30-34 year olds. The District of Bamako remains the epicenter of the disease with 52.60% of cases.

In addition, 137 deaths have been recorded out of the 3,706 cases, representing an overall lethality of 3.7%.



Distribution of the number of rumors collected by theme



Distribution of confirmed cases of COVID-19 by region as of November 8, Mali. (Source: Ministry of Health)

The Malian populations still in the denial of COVID-19

Malian populations believe less and less in the existence of COVID-19 despite information and awareness campaigns about the disease. Preventive measures are increasingly relegated to the background or not respected at all. Although Mali and Africa have been relatively spared by COVID-19, this is by no means the time to lower our guard at the risk of exposing populations to a potential second wave of the disease. Hence the need to redouble vigilance by strictly adhering to the barrier measures enacted by the WHO, including the wearing of masks, hand washing, and physical distancing.

Source:

- WHO. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) advice for the public. 10 nov 2020

RISK LEVELS



HIGH

MEDIUM

LOW

RUMOUR #1

"We don't believe it (a second wave of Covid-19). Without containment and without putting much rigor into barrier measures, African countries have managed to resist the Covid. Soon, the end" - Internet user on Twitter.

While it is true that Africa has been less affected by COVID-19 than expected, the disease remains real with 1,300,000 cases and 30,000 deaths on the African continent. In an analysis conducted for the journal Science in August 2020, a group of researchers hypothesized that early action by authorities in Africa may have played a role. *"Measures such as travel restrictions, curfews and school closures were put in place very early in Africa compared to other continents, often before an African country had detected a case," they wrote. According to the same team of researchers, "age, for example, could be a reason. On average, the population of the African continent is 19.7 years old".* However, prevention through the application of barrier measures remains a requirement if Africa is to avoid a second wave of COVID-19.

Sources :

- OMS. COVID-19 in the WHO African Region. 6 nov 2020
- Science. COVID-19 in Africa: Dampening the storm? 2 nov 2020

PREVENTATIVE

RUMOUR #3

"Vaccination programs are initiated to administer the COVID-19 virus to our children in Mali" - Resident of Kéniéba (Kayes Region).

According to UNICEF, many of the diseases that kill children in Mali are completely preventable. Unfortunately, only 45 percent of children in Mali receive all basic vaccines and 14 percent receive no vaccine at all, depriving them of protection against common childhood diseases. It should be noted, however, that to date there is no evidence that any vaccine has transmitted COVID-19 in Mali or elsewhere in the world.

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic around the world, WHO, in collaboration with scientists, companies, and global health organizations, has been working to develop a vaccine to also make COVID-19 a vaccine-preventable disease.

Sources :

- WHO. The push for a COVID-19 vaccine. 7 nov 2020
- Unicef Mali. Health. 10 nov 2020

VACCINE

RUMOUR #2

"Antibacterial gels cause sexual impotence and miscarriages" - Resident of Bamako.

To date, no drug or vaccine is available to address COVID-19 infection and the rate of infection is increasing dramatically worldwide. Only preventive measures have been proposed by the WHO to control COVID-19 and stay safe. Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to get rid of germs in most situations. If soap and water are not readily available, you can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

Source :

- CDC. When and How to Wash Your Hands. 6 nov. 2020

HYGIENE

RUMOUR #4

"I am not saying that Covid-19 does not exist but it is simply a temporary cold or flu" - Resident of Kéniéba, Kayes region on Studio Tamani radio station.

The COVID-19 virus and the cold/influenza virus have strong similarities marked by respiratory manifestations. In addition, both viruses are transmitted through contact and respiratory droplets.

However, there are differences between the two diseases, particularly in the speed of transmission. According to the WHO, influenza can spread more rapidly than COVID-19. Also COVID-19 appears to be more aggressive than cold or flu because of higher mortality and long-term sequelae for COVID-19 compared to influenza, especially seasonal influenza.

WHO reminds that it is therefore important that everyone takes the same public health measures (hand and respiratory hygiene consisting of coughing into the crease of the elbow or into a handkerchief that is thrown away immediately after use, wearing a mask, physical distancing) in order to prevent contamination.

Sources :

- WHO. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): Similarities and differences with influenza. 6 nov 2020)
- WHO. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) advice for the public. 10 nov 2020

SYMPTOMS

RUMOUR #5

"For the management of our patient, we were referred to a private clinic that had neither hematologists nor infectious diseases specialists. Moreover, we were not informed of the evolution of the disease and our patient died from it" - Accompanying a patient who died from COVID-19 in a clinic speaking on the radio Studio Tamani

Faced with the reduced capacity of public hospitals, the Malian health authorities have identified two private clinics, more specifically the Golden Live Hospital and the Pasteur Polyclinic, to support the COVID-19 patient management units. However, some patients' relatives complain about the system and the quality of patient care in these private clinics. Questioned on the radio Studio Tamani, Prof. Kassoum Mentha, member of the scientific committee for the fight against COVID-19 in Mali, reassured that "these clinics were chosen because they had the skills to ensure the follow-up of COVID-19 patients with the same level of care as in public hospitals." Moreover, according to the Ministry of Health, a memorandum of understanding was drawn up to allow private structures to be part of the process that the State has put in place to deal with coronavirus disease. In this regard, the Ministry of Health has supported private health structures through training, sensitization and information.

Sources :

- Studio Tamani. Actu Covid : prise en charge des patients de COVID-19 dans les hôpitaux privés. 6 nov. 2020
- ABamako.com. Deux cliniques privées autorisées à faire la prise en charge du COVID-19. 17 nov 2020

HEALTHCARE

RUMOUR #7

"After the first hours of COVID-19, we got rid of the masks because we feel a little immune because of the low rate of contamination in Africa and especially in the Sahelian zone" - Tailor in a video published by a media outlet on Twitter

Within the Malian population, more and more people are doubting the existence of COVID-19. Although the rates of COVID-19 contamination are low in Mali and in Africa compared to other countries and continents, the disease is still a reality to be reckoned with!

According to the WHO, Mali has to date more than 3500 cases of COVID-19 and more than 136 deaths. Hence the need to continue to observe barrier measures in order to avoid the spread of the disease. These barrier measures include maintaining physical distance, wearing a mask, washing hands with soap, sneezing or coughing into the elbow, avoiding handshakes, avoiding large gatherings, etc..

Source :

- WHO. Mali: WHO Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard. 6 nov. 2020

IMMUNITY

RUMOUR #6

"Some preachers distilled biased interpretations of the sacred texts and encouraged people to trivialize COVID-19" - Professor at the University of Bamako in a video published by a media on Twitter

In Bamako and throughout Mali, people are distrustful of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in mosques where, according to the High Islamic Council of Mali, the respect of the social distance of one meter as advocated by the WHO is "incompatible with the rules of collective prayer".

Even if the Malian authorities have not decreed the closure of places of worship, religious leaders nevertheless agree on one point: "the teachings of Islam advise the faithful to move away from danger in the event of a proven health risk". Hence the need for Muslim worshippers to observe COVID-19 prevention measures at all times and in all places. In addition, health authorities and the humanitarian community continue to increase awareness and information campaigns among the population in order to stem the spread of the disease. The RiT Mali team and its radio partners are contributing to this awareness campaign with radio programs providing reliable and accurate information to the populations on COVID-19 in order to help them protect themselves against the pandemic.

In the case of religious holidays, the WHO has also made recommendations that allow people to protect themselves from the virus while continuing their religious practice.

Sources :

- Studio Tamani. Ramadan et Covid-19 au Mali : "la distance d'un mètre ne sera pas respectée dans les mosquées", selon le HCl. 2 nov. 2020
- DW. Au Mali, les mosquées restent ouvertes malgré le coronavirus. 10 nov 2020
- AMAP Mali. Lutte contre le Covid-19 : Les préceptes de l'islam contre les épidémies. 10 nov 2020
- WHO. Safe Eid al Adha practices in the context of COVID-19. 10 nov 2020.

TRANSMISSION



RUMEUR #8

"The Malian government pays money to people to declare themselves sick with COVID-19" - Malian citizen.

ANSWER

Emphasizing social networks and communities since the early hours of the pandemic in Mali, this rumor suggests that the government would pay money to people to declare themselves sick with COVID-19 so that the country could benefit from funds to fight the disease. This rumor confirms the refusal of the population to believe in the existence of COVID-19, which has affected more than 3,500 people and caused more than 136 deaths to date. It symbolizes the lack of trust that people have in national authorities in their dealings with the management of the COVID-19 pandemic and other health issues. It should be noted, however, that in order to combat COVID-19 in Mali, the highest Malian authorities have created a Special Fund to enable private and state structures, associations, NGOs, and people of good will, from inside and outside Mali, to contribute to the fight against the coronavirus. In addition, the Malian authorities have launched the "One Malian, One facemask" initiative to help stem the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sources :

- WHO. Mali: WHO Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard. 6 nov. 2020
- Primature du Mali. Lancement de l'opération « Un Malien, un masque ». 7 nov 2020

GOVERNMENT

WHAT TO DO WITH THESE COVID-19 DENIAL RUMOURS?

Denial of the existence of the virus is very present in communities, and the root causes can be multiple. Beyond essential reminders about protective measures and recommended behaviors in daily life, it is important for the field worker to be as close as possible to the communities and to be familiar with codes and customs in order to listen, understand, discuss and positively influence the perceptions of those at risk.

The aim is to understand where the rumor of denial comes from and to propose adequate responses for the populations and with their participation, while relying on community or religious leaders.

