



Internews

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

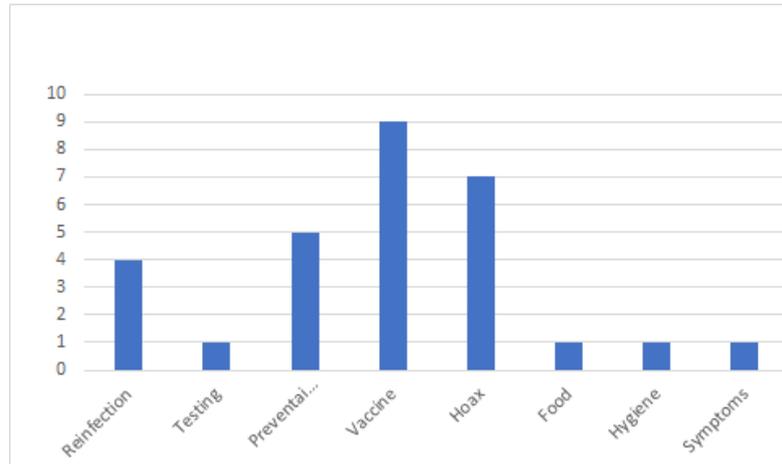
Data collection is conducted in the field with AMSODE's outreach workers and volunteers, through community radio stations and by monitoring various information platforms and sites (Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, publications, commentaries, stories, etc.).

During the period from November 11 to 27, 2020, we collected 47 rumors, 18 of which were tagged as high risk, 12 as medium risk and 17 as low risk. In addition, 38 of these rumours came from Facebook, 5 from Youtube and 1 from Twitter.

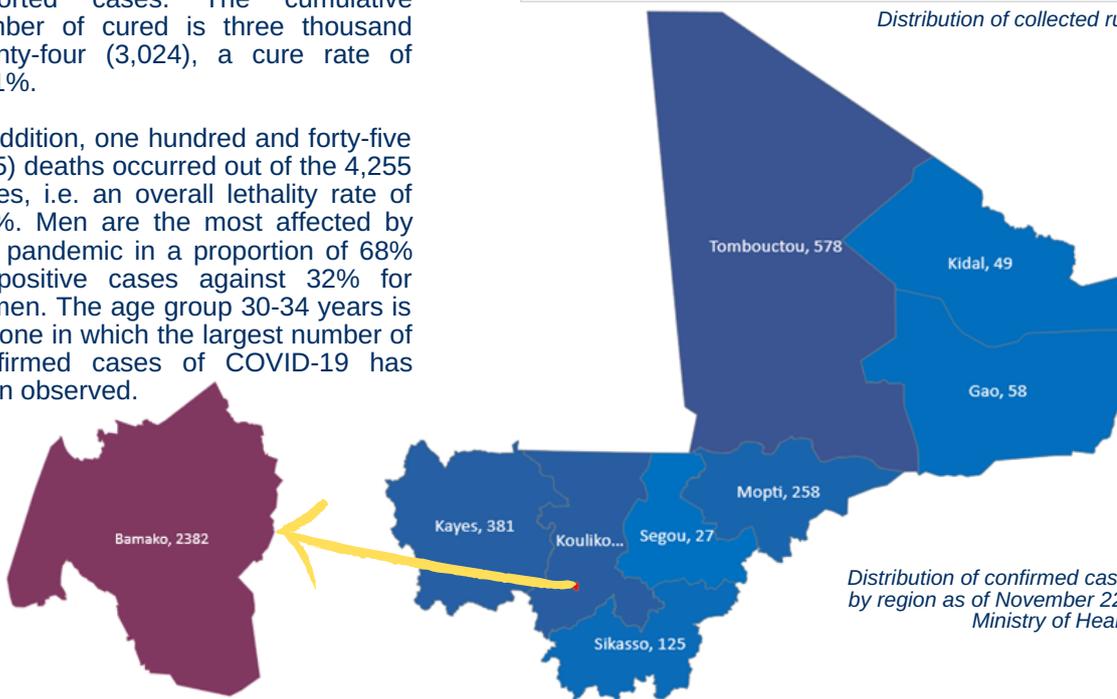
COVID-19 SITUATION IN MALI

From November 16 to 22, 2020, three hundred and fifty-five (355) cases of COVID-19 and four (4) deaths were recorded during the period. The milestone of 4,000 confirmed COVID-19 cases was reached on November 18, 2020. The cumulative number of confirmed cases since the beginning of the epidemic is four thousand two hundred and fifty-five (4,255) including one hundred and forty-five (145) imported cases. The cumulative number of cured is three thousand twenty-four (3,024), a cure rate of 75.1%.

In addition, one hundred and forty-five (145) deaths occurred out of the 4,255 cases, i.e. an overall lethality rate of 3.4%. Men are the most affected by this pandemic in a proportion of 68% of positive cases against 32% for women. The age group 30-34 years is the one in which the largest number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 has been observed.



Distribution of collected rumors by theme.



Distribution of confirmed cases of COVID-19 by region as of November 22, Mali. (Source: Ministry of Health)

An alarming resurgence of COVID-19 cases in Mali

The Malian authorities are concerned about a resurgence of the coronavirus pandemic in Mali due in particular to a relaxation of the practice of barrier measures, the importation of new cases with the opening of borders and recent public gatherings, particularly in the context of the celebration of the religious festival of Maouloud.

On November 24, 2020, Mali recorded a record number of 91 new positive cases of COVID-19. This alarming situation reminds citizens the existence of the pandemic and the need to resume barrier measures such as hand washing, the wearing of masks and social distancing.

CORONA KUNKAN #3
NOVEMBER 2020

RUMOUR ANSWER

RISK LEVELS



HIGH

MEDIUM

LOW

RUMOUR #1

"They say that now when you go to the hospital, they put tissue over your mouth to kill you and make you look like you died as a result of COVID-19. Nurses are breaking the silence about this" - Internet user on a WhatsApp group

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Mali, attendance at health centers has declined sharply, fueled by people's fear of contracting the disease. "Coronavirus is not an African disease! Even African doctors don't know about this disease. When you bring your patient to the hospital, they accuse him of having Coronavirus." says a 52-year-old man from Bamako.

In an article published on the online news site [ouestaf](#), Dr. Mamadou K. Touré, head of the Anesthesia Department at a Bamako hospital, confirms that "COVID-19 has impacted other hospital activities. Attendance has dropped significantly. "This situation makes the population vulnerable to COVID-19 and other diseases that, if treated quickly, could save lives.

Furthermore, to date, no information has been reported confirming that medical personnel are transmitting COVID-19 to patients.

In a video published by the online information site [le360](#), health personnel encourage people to return to medical consultations in health centers in order to prevent and cure the diseases they might suffer from. They reassure that health centers have implemented barrier measures against COVID-19, including hand washing and the wearing of masks to protect patients and caregivers from possible contamination.

Sources :

- OuestAf. Covid-19 in Mali: hospitals between good and bad. 24 Nov 2020
- Le360.ma Mali: Covid-19 and non attendance of health centers. 24 Nov 2020

HEALTHCARE

RUMOUR #2

"Asking poor village residents to regularly wash their hands with soap is a false debate. In Mali, there are thousands of rural people who don't even often have soap to wash their bodies, let alone regularly wash their hands or feet with it. Their first priority is to find something to eat first...." - Internet user of the website [maliweb.net](#)

In Mali, the implementation of the awareness campaign against COVID-19 in rural areas "does not seem relevant in the eyes of some Internet users" because they believe that rural populations have other more vital concerns such as access to food. This opinion is also shared by an inhabitant of an IDP camp in the Sikasso region who considers that "the disease we have is more terrible than COVID-19. The disease doesn't exist, it's just a business".

While Bamako is the epicenter of the pandemic in Mali with 56% of cases, the interior regions account for a total of 46% of cases. Given the limited access to health services in rural areas, awareness campaigns on COVID-19 and preventive actions such as hand washing, masks, and social distancing are becoming a requirement to curb the spread of the disease and save lives.

As [UNICEF](#) reminds us, "During a pandemic, frequent handwashing with soap and water is among the most cost-effective, easy, and important measures to prevent the spread of a virus."

In addition, beyond preventing the COVID-19 pandemic, hand washing is a hygienic gesture that, according to the WHO, has saved millions of lives in recent years against numerous infections.

Sources :

- Ministry of Health of Mali. COVID-19 Situation Report WHO n°129. November 22, 2020
- WHO. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) advice for the public: Mythbusters. Nov. 24, 2020
- Unicef. Everything you need to know about washing your hands to protect against coronavirus (COVID-19). Washing your hands can protect you and your loved ones. Nov. 24, 2020
- WHO. SAVE LIVES: Practice hand hygiene. Nov. 24, 2020

HYGIENE

RUMOUR #3

"We don't believe in the existence of Coronavirus disease! As a proof in the markets, we exchange money without protection. I don't wear gloves or masks and I go to the market to buy condiments. The saleswomen don't wear them either" - Woman, 23 years old during a radio interview

ANSWER

In Mali, the COVID-19 pandemic has had no effect on market attendance by the population. "In a country where people live from day to day, it would be illusory to ask them to stay at home," can be heard throughout the city. At a camp for internally displaced people in the Segou region, a resident said that "we don't believe in this coronavirus disease because so far we haven't seen any sick people". This situation is alarming because it promotes the spread of COVID-19 "which is transmitted in the population, mainly through close contact with an infected person."

Aware of the country's socio-economic realities, Mali's health authorities, in collaboration with their partners, regularly organize decontamination of Bamako's markets. The health authorities and the WHO invite people to protect themselves wherever they are "by taking a few simple precautions, such as keeping a physical distance from others, wearing a mask, ventilating rooms well, avoiding gatherings, washing your hands, and coughing into your folded elbow or a handkerchief."

Sources :

- Maliweb. Mali/Coronavirus: the bus terminal, the Sogoniko market and the Halles de Bamako disinfected by the civil protection. 24 Nov 2020
- WHO. Q&A: How is COVID-19 transmitted?. 24 Nov 2020
- WHO. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) advice for the public: Mythbusters. Nov 24, 2020

PREVENTATIVE



RUMOUR #4

« Je ne porte pas de masques à l'école car on n'est pas obligé d'en porter ! D'ailleurs même je ne crois pas en l'existence de la maladie » - Élève, 14 ans

ANSWER

In Mali, schools reopened after several months of closure following the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to combat the spread of the disease in schools, the Malian authorities have taken a number of measures as recalled by the Secretary General of the Ministry of Education in these terms: "we have decided that in each class we will have 25 students who will respect the barrier measures including hand washing, wearing masks and the use of hydro-alcoholic gel for students, teachers and administrative staff".

However, it must be noted that in some schools, these measures are not respected at all. While some school officials say they do not have sufficient means to implement these barrier measures, others say they do not believe in the existence of the disease (including students and teachers).

The WHO reminds us that "measures should be put in place to limit exposure, such as: maintaining a distance of at least one meter between people, especially between offices; frequent hand washing and respect for respiratory hygiene; wearing age-appropriate masks; ventilation and cleaning of the environment. Schools should: sensitize staff and students to COVID-19 prevention measures; establish a schedule for daily cleaning and disinfection of the school environment, facilities, and frequently touched surfaces; provide hand hygiene facilities; and follow national/local guidelines for mask use."

Sources :

- MaliJet.com. Government press release on the closure of schools in the Republic of Mali. Nov 24, 2020
- Sahelien.com. Mali: what is planned for the resumption of classes. 24 Nov 2020
- Ouestaf.com. Barrier measures against Covid-19: Malians don't care.... 24 Nov 2020
- WHO. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): Schools. Nov 24, 2020

PREVENTATIVE

RUMOUR #5

"When I have symptoms similar to COVID-19, I prefer to take care of myself and avoid going to health centers that are places where I can get COVID-19" - Male, 36 years old

ANSWER

For fear of contracting COVID-19 when going to health centers for a medical consultation, some patients say they opt for "self-medication". This attitude has resulted in a decrease in the number of visits to health centers in Mali, which could hinder the rapid management of patients and the treatment of diseases including COVID-19. In its efforts to combat self-medication, the WHO has developed recommendations on its website regarding drugs or therapies to prevent or cure COVID-19. In addition, the WHO recalls that "some Western, traditional or domestic remedies may provide comfort and relieve symptoms, but there is no evidence that current medicines can prevent or cure the disease".

However, the WHO does not recommend taking any medication, including antibiotics, as a self-medication to prevent or cure the new coronavirus. "Antibiotics do not work against viruses, but only against bacterial infections," says the WHO, adding that they should not be used as a means of prevention or treatment of COVID-19. Antibiotics should only be used on prescription to treat a bacterial infection.

Source :
 • Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) advice for the public: Mythbusters

TREATMENT

RUMOUR #6

"We don't want to wear imported masks because we spray the virus on the masks and send them here." - Resident of an IDP camp in the Mopti region.

ANSWER

This rumor, which has been circulating in communities since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Mali, may discourage people from wearing masks, particularly imported masks, because of doubts about their manufacture, origin and hygiene. To date, the wearing of masks as well as hand washing and respect for social distancing are the most important barrier measures recommended by the WHO to prevent and curb the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, the social measures taken by the Malian authorities in the early hours of the COVID-19 pandemic included the production and distribution of 20 million masks under the "One Malian, One Mask" program. This initiative aims to locally produce cotton-based masks for the population. This would incidentally dispel any doubts about the hygiene of the masks and boost the local economy.

With regard to the wearing of masks, the WHO recommends the following:

- "Wash your hands before putting on your mask, as well as before and after taking it off.
- Make sure it covers your nose, mouth and chin.

Sources :
 • WHO. When and how to use masks 24 Nov 2020
 • WHO. Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19): advice to the general public. Nov 24, 2020

PREVENTATIVE

As in many countries and communities, the denial of the existence of COVID-19 is persistent and materializes in the laxity of compliance with prevention and protection measures. As a result, there has been a resurgence of cases of COVID-19 in Mali, with the 4,000 contamination mark passed on November 18, 2020. The work of community agents in the field is even more important in this context in order to strengthen dialogue, listening and sensitization of communities on prevention measures against the coronavirus pandemic.

One of the major risks associated with this resurgence of COVID-19 cases in the country is the inevitable overflow of testing units and healthcare facilities by the influx of new cases, which would make effective patient management even more difficult. COVID-19 is a reality. Let us therefore be doubly vigilant through the strict observance of barrier measures such as hand washing, the wearing of masks or scarves, and social distancing in order to curb its spread within our communities.

WHAT RESPONSE TO THESE RUMORS?

