



Internews

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.

FACTS

- No cases of abuse have been reported or verified to date. Furthermore, health care personnel are most at risk from COVID-19 because they are in direct contact with patients.
- In Mali as well as abroad, health workers are regularly infected; despite this, they continue to work to help patients, especially those infected with the coronavirus.
- Individuals are always pre-tested before being declared ill with **COVID-19**.
- As of November 26, 2020, Mali had 44 new daily cases of COVID-19 out of a total of 4,505, including 148 deaths and 3,076 cases cured of COVID-19.
- According to a telephone interview conducted with the National Coordinator of COVID-19 in Mali, Prof. Akory AG Iknane, cases of deaths due to the pandemic in Mali and elsewhere are linked to the co-morbidity of certain patients, i.e. they have a medical condition that favors the development of the disease in its severe form: people over 60 years of age, with a weak immune system, diabetics, people with hypertension or the combination of diabetes and hypertension, and finally, people suffering from obesity.
- Still with the aim of accompanying COVID-19 patients, the National Coordinator of COVID-19 in Mali recalled that a psycho-social care team, chaired by the psychologist Tiéman Diarra, had been set up. It regularly visits all the coronavirus treatment centers in Bamako.

Sources:

- Telephone interview with Prof. Akory AG Iknane, National Coordinator of COVID-19 in Mali. 23 Nov.2020.
- Ministry of Health and Social Action of Mali. Guidelines for the care and protection of health personnel in the context of COVID-19. On line. Nov. 23, 2020.

WHAT ARE PEOPLE SAYING

Journalist
on a Whatsapp group

"They say that now when you go to the hospital, they put tissue over your mouth to kill you, supposedly because of COVID-19. The nurses come out of silence! Even if you don't have coronavirus disease, they kill you saying that's what it is."

FEAR OF GOING
TO HOSPITALS
AND HEALTH
CENTERS

In this period of COVID-19, it is common to hear all kinds of rumors, most often based on hearsay, beliefs or communities' lack of knowledge about the disease. Such information can be dangerous because it discourages people from seeking care, thus increasing the risk of infection within communities. Stigmatization of health care workers may also pose a risk to health workers who are on the front line of the virus (in the management of patients but also those who are most exposed to the virus) and may lead to discouraging or weary behaviors.

MEDIA TIPS

- **Find ways to illustrate the important role that health and medical personnel play every day** in treating and accompanying patients and families. For example, you can prepare a program on the difficulties of work, but especially on the daily successes of the health care personnel in charge of the COVID-19 response in dispensaries or hospitals.
- **Carry out programs for communities to prevent stigmatization of health workers** (but also of cured patients). Interviews with health workers working in the communities and testimonies of healed people can help restore the bond of trust with the populations and convince them to visit the health centers.
- **Initiate face to face discussions between a medical doctor and a COVID-19 cured patient** so that everyone talks about the reality in the treatment centers. Very effective in shedding light on such a rumor.
- **Cultivate the empathy of the population towards the families who have lost loved ones to the coronavirus.**

SUGGESTED CONTACTS

- **Youssef AG Ibrahim** / Journalist and blogger, cured patient of COVID-19 in Mali; Tel. 00223 79 42 96 01
- **Akory AG Iknane** / National Coordinator of COVID-19 in Mali; Tel: +223 70 38 30 30; E-mail: akory.agiknane@gmail.com

PRINCIPLES OF JOURNALISM

The media and journalists must adhere to the highest professional and ethical standards, give priority to authoritative messages about the crisis and refrain from publishing, and thereby amplifying, unverified stories. (Council of Europe).

WHAT ARE PEOPLE SAYING

Female, 23 years old

DENIAL OF THE EXISTENCE OF COVID-19

"We don't believe in the existence of Coronavirus disease! As a proof in the markets, we exchange money without protection".

The virus is transmitted through respiratory droplets. Thus, handling money with your hands could facilitate the spread and transmission of the virus if a sick person (who does not use barrier gestures) comes into contact with bills or coins. This rumour may reinforce the belief that cash does not pose a danger to everyone and that hand washing is not necessary. In addition, markets are places where people are concentrated, which may increase the risk factor for spread if barrier gestures are ignored.

MEDIA TIPS

- **Interview** a BCEAO (or banking institution) official to find out if the banknotes are disinfected.
- Since it is the hands that touch the bills and make it easy for the virus to enter sensitive areas of the body, people **will need to be educated about handwashing** under all circumstances (or the use of gloves if washing is made difficult).
- **Produce micro-programs** to encourage people to use the electronic payment system whenever possible.

PRINCIPLES OF JOURNALISM

In this period of global pandemic, journalists are returning to the fundamentals of the profession: **explaining, investigating and verifying** information. The objective of media professionals during this period? **To maintain social ties, educate and entertain.**

SUGGESTED CONTACTS

- **Main Office of the Central Bank of West African States BCEAO in Mali**, BP 206 Bamako, Tel: +223 20 22 37 56
- **Malian Red Cross**: Bamako, BP: 280, Tel : (+223) 20 24 45 / 69 44 90 08 E-mail : crmalienne@croixrouge-mali.org
- **NGO Tagné Mali**: Koulikoro-Kati, Tel: +223 66567363 / 76 39 37 92
- **WHO Mali Office**: Bamako, Tel: +223 20 20 37 14

FACTS

- The WHO invited people to make maximum use of electronic payments. However, not everyone has the possibility or even the desire to use this means of payment. Therefore, it is strongly advised to wash your hands regularly in case of contact with banknotes.
- According to an Australian study, the coronavirus causing the COVID-19 pandemic can survive up to 28 days in a cool, dark environment on surfaces such as telephones and bank bills.
- Some studies have established that banknotes can be contaminated with pathogenic microorganisms, including viruses. A study by U.S. researchers shows that "*HCoV-19 (the COVID-19 virus) retains its viral load on copper, a metal, for 4 hours. On steel, this duration is up to 72 hours. But coins are made of metals: aluminum, iron, copper, silver, bronze and steel*".

Sources:

- Paris match. The Covid-19 can "survive" 28 days on banknotes and phones. 27 nov.2020.
- Ecomatin.net. Coronavirus banknotes and coins, vector of COVID-19. Nov. 27, 2020.
- WHO. Q&A on COVID-19. Online, Nov. 27, 2020.

HOW WE DO IT

Data collection is done 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.).

WHAT ARE PEOPLE SAYING

Internet user of the website maliweb.net

"Asking poor village residents to regularly wash their hands with soap is a false subject. 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 get enough to eat first..."

VITAL CONCERNS TAKE PRECEDENCE OVER BARRIER ACTIONS

It is true that living conditions are different in urban and rural areas. Some highly vulnerable populations have limited economic means that could put them at greater risk of disease. However, many of them adapt their lifestyles to the realities of their conditions and often have alternatives to protect themselves.

In addition to emphasizing economic aspects or accessibility (to health services, free health kits, etc.) that put people's health at risk, this rumor may also highlight the weariness of some people in the face of the pandemic. Other rumors of this type have been heard, highlighting people's denial and fatigue in the face of the disease and the social changes demanded and sometimes imposed.

MEDIA TIPS

- **Encourage self-help for vulnerable people in communities.** Call on community leaders or representatives of self-help associations to propose a response to the most needy. Take care not to stigmatize them through these interventions.
- **Organize a public radio programs** in villages with the help of humanitarian and community representatives to **sensitize the population** not only about COVID-19, but also to **listen to their perceptions** and the alternative solutions they have developed.
- **Maintain good relations** with humanitarian workers and **inform the communities** of the distribution programs of soaps, hydro-alcoholic gels and other health kits in the localities.
- **Interview a health worker** to learn about alternatives to handwashing with soap and provide a space for discussion (live calls or focus groups) for communities.
- **Design radio programs** with village community members and a humanitarian worker on the benefits of handwashing with soap.
- **Tell success stories** in village communities that have installed and are using handwashing with soap on a regular basis.
- **Report from communities** that would not have access to water to **understand the alternatives** that have been put in place.

We welcome your comments and suggestions to help local media produce reliable information and reporting on COVID-19. Please contact **Maimouna Sidibe**, Media Liaison Officer, Rooted In Trust, Mali at msidibe@internews.org.

FACTS

- Handwashing is one of the first recommendations made by the WHO to prevent coronavirus disease. Despite fatigue in the face of the pandemic, it is therefore important to continue to implement this measure. This simple, accessible and familiar gesture (already present in people's habits) is one of the most effective barrier gestures against the virus.
- In Mali, several donations of handwashing kits and soaps have been made in the villages.
- Several sketches in the Bambara language are broadcast on Mali's National Television ORTM and microprograms are broadcast on the national radio to raise awareness about barrier gestures, two channels that are followed in the villages.
- Africans, especially Malians, already have a culture of handwashing with soap because we eat with our hands, so we wash them beforehand.
- It is not uncommon for families in the villages not to buy soap because many women in the villages know how to make their own soaps from natural products. This know-how considerably reduces the potential cost of buying industrial soaps.
- Awareness and distribution campaigns promote the use of soap and its manufacture. The example of the NGO TAGNE which donated on October 28, 2020, soap making kits to 90 girls in 45 villages of the commune of Didiéni (Koulikoro region) is worth noting. In addition, the Network of Traditional Communicators for Development (RECOTRADE) and the Youth Council in several villages in Mali are also organizing awareness activities throughout the country.
- **WHO and UNICEF** recommend that "in the absence of soap and water or hydro-alcoholic solution in households, the use of ashes may be considered. Ash, in particular, can inactivate pathogens by increasing pH. Finally, washing with water alone, although the least effective of the four options, may reduce fecal contamination of hands and reduce diarrhea. Regardless of the type of product used, hand washing and hand rubbing, including the amount of rinse water used, are key factors in reducing pathogen contamination of hands."

Sources :

- Dr. Moussa Modibo Diarra, chief physician of the Keniéba circle (kayes)
- ORTM available on channel 230 (Canal Sat Afrique), or the ORTM MALI TV application on Google play.
- www.studiotzmani.org/ Kati: donation of soap-making kits to 90 girls from 45 villages in the commune of Didiéni on 23 November 2020.
- World Health Organization & United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2020). Water, Sanitation, Hygiene and Waste Management related to SARS-CoV-2, the virus responsible for COVID-19: Provisional guidelines. July 29, 2020.

