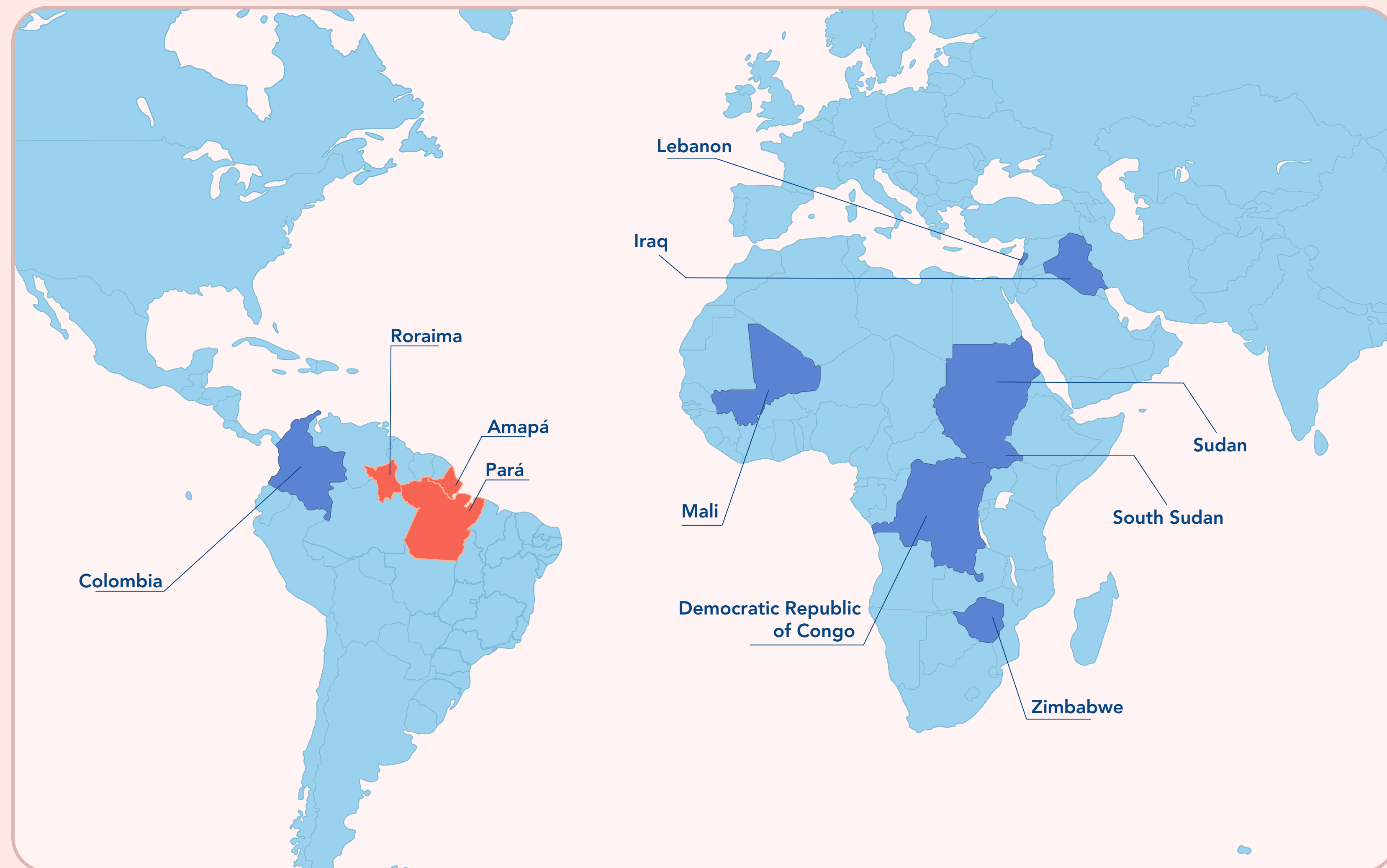


ROOTED IN TRUST 2.0

Rooted in Trust, run by Internews, is aimed at creating a response to the 'infodemic' (misinformation, 'fake news', rumors and information overload, particularly in relation to COVID-19) that deepens discrimination and affects access to services and basic assistance in vulnerable communities. Brazil was included in the second edition of the global program, which is also underway in Colombia, Lebanon, Iraq, Mali, Sudan, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Zimbabwe. In the country, RiT focuses especially on indigenous and quilombola populations in the states of Amapá, Roraima and Pará, in the North region, where our partners Instituto de Pesquisa e Formação Indígena (Iepé) and Instituto Internacional de Educação do Brasil (IEB) are already developing reference programs in several areas. The project intends to support the media with training, information and resources related to the coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic so that journalists and communicators can provide these communities with quality information that strengthens the information ecosystems in which they are embedded.



WHAT THEY'RE SAYING...

RUMOR #1

THEME: VACCINE COMPOSITION/VACCINE HESITATION

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A person said they made a list of all the ingredients supposedly present in the composition of the vaccines against COVID-19, which included substances such as mercury, formaldehyde, tween 80, aluminum, etc. Then she asked a Poison Control employee if they were benign or poisonous. The supposed answer from the specialist was that they were mostly poisonous, used in products like fertilizers, pesticides, and in substances to preserve corpses. Therefore, if they were given to children, parents could be accused of child endangerment and even of committing a crime against their safety.



ANONYMOUS, TELEGRAM GROUP
FROM AMAPÁ, JANUARY 2022

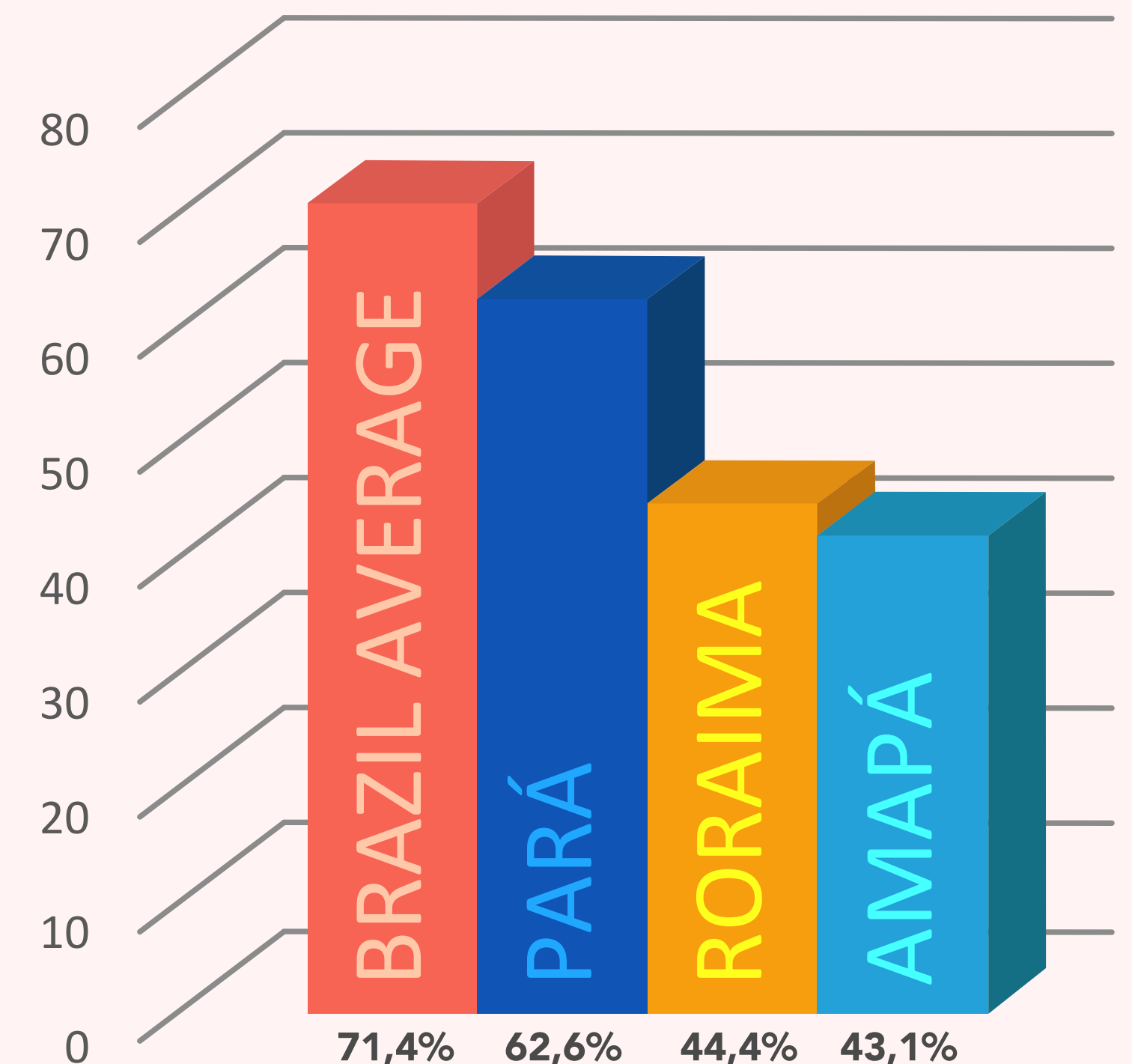
IS THIS TRUE
OR JUST A
RUMOR?

WHY IT MATTERS

The idea that there are unknown and obscure substances in vaccine formulas can generate hesitation. The mention of 'mercury' is particularly harmful because it dialogues with previous problems faced by riverine and indigenous populations in the North of the country, which involve contamination by this metal due to illegal gold mining in rivers. In addition, creating a connection between vaccines and pesticides or fertilizers can allude to conflicts between native populations and illegal land grabbers/farmers, who use these harmful products and harm local and sustainable agriculture, traditional of indigenous communities.

AMAPÁ AND RORAIMA: WORST VACCINATION RATES IN BRAZIL

Percentage of population vaccinated with the first complete vaccination cycle (two doses of Pfizer, Astrazeneca or Coronavac, and one dose of Janssen) on 2/17/2022



SOURCE:
Press consortium

RESPONDING TO THE RUMOR

- The vaccines distributed in Brazil contain different ingredients, but none of them are poisonous. The formulas of all immunizers were approved by the National Health Surveillance Agency (Anvisa) after careful analysis and their package inserts are available on the agency's official website. None of them contain mercury or aluminum.
- The greatest difference in the composition of a vaccine such as that of Pfizer, for example, the most used in the population of northern Brazil (41% of those vaccinated in Roraima, 39% in Pará), is that it contains messenger ribonucleic acid (mRNA) of the virus in its formula, a more modern solution than the inactivated virus used to manufacture Coronavac and AstraZeneca.
- Pfizer's vaccine still contains lipids, which provide a layer of protection for the mRNA; salts, which help balance acidity in people's bodies; and sucrose, known simply as sugar, which helps vaccine molecules keep their shape during freezing.

- According to experts, just like any other vaccine, immunizers against COVID-19 can cause severe allergic reactions. But they are extremely rare: only 5 out of every 1 million people vaccinated (0.000005%) in the United States had some form of anaphylaxis (swelling of the throat, lips and tongue, difficulty breathing, among other treatable symptoms), according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- The severe reaction rate is infinitely lower than the fatality rate of COVID-19 in infected people, which is 1.18% (11,800 deaths per 1 million registered cases) in the US and 2.38% (23,800 deaths per 1 million cases) in Brazil, according to the Our World in Data, a platform by the University of Oxford (as of February 7, 2022).
- But COVID-19 immunizers may be safe even for people with a history of severe allergic reactions. A recent study by Israeli scientists found that 98% of them did not experience any serious problems while taking the Pfizer vaccine.



SOURCES:

State Health Secretaries of PA, AP and RR, Anvisa, CDC-EUA, Our World in Data/University of Oxford, Jama Network.

WHAT THEY'RE SAYING...

RUMOR #2

THEME: LABELING VACCINES AS AN EXPERIMENT



An anonymous Telegram user spread the rumor that children vaccination against COVID-19 would be an experiment that neither laboratories nor governments would take responsibility for. The user utilized quotes attributed to scientist Geert Vanden Bossche, PhD in virology and microbiology, to state that children would suffer severe damage if vaccinated, something incomparably worse than the adverse effects of the vaccines that have been observed.



ANONYMOUS, TELEGRAM
GROUP FROM PARÁ,
JANUARY 2022

IS THIS TRUE
OR JUST A
RUMOR?

WHY IT MATTERS

The author of this message based it on claims made by a Belgian scientist which have already been debunked by Brazilian journalists and scientists. The suspicion related to 'experiments' is particularly strong in Brazil due to investigations involving unauthorized trials of hydroxychloroquine in COVID-19 patients who needed other kinds of medical treatment. Anti-vaccine activists in Brazil refer to the vaccine as an 'experiment', contrasting it with chloroquine, often touted as a safe solution for COVID-19 (the drug is also used against malaria, a disease that is still notably present in the North of the country, especially among indigenous populations).

RESPONDING TO THE RUMOR



- Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna vaccines are the first to effectively use mRNA technology on a large scale, and were made available to the public in record time (about 10 months), but they are not experimental. According to a report by BBC Brazil, the revolutionary method has been developed and studied since the 1990s. In the last 15 years, new discoveries have made it increasingly safe.
- Pfizer's vaccine was tested on more than 43,000 people, while Moderna's, which was not made available in Brazil, was injected on more than 25,000 volunteers during the testing phase before they were released to the public.

- The agility of the process is due to the abundance of resources made available to face the COVID-19 pandemic. "Testing vaccines is very expensive, especially in phase 3. The chemical process of producing a vaccine usually doesn't take a lot of time. 95% of the time is spent on testing," told the Norbert Pardi, an immunologist and professor at the University of Pennsylvania.

SOURCES:
BBC Brasil, Pfizer e Moderna.



ROOTED IN TRUST 1.0

1ST YEAR OF THE PANDEMIC



TRAINING

Rooted in Trust will provide training and capacity-building opportunities so that journalists, communicators, and influencers can be updated on the possibilities, limitations and debates related to the coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic, mainly with a focus on the communities of interest to the project. We already have two free courses available to the media: Let's Talk COVID-19 and Let's Talk Vaccines. Additionally, the Knight Center, UNESCO and WHO made available the webinar 'Vaccines, variants and drugs: What journalists need to know to improve coverage of COVID-19' on YouTube. We recommend it!



MOBILIZATION AND POSSIBLE ACTIONS

In addition to rumor analysis, Internews considers it relevant to reflect on possible actions in response to the “infodemic”. Here, we suggest a few:

- Building support and engagement networks, so that national and regional media create links with local and community actors - influencers (digital or not), local mobilizers, community leaders. This way, information will have a better chance of reaching 'micro-spaces' and serving the most vulnerable communities.

- A practical example of this kind of action would be to check how childhood vaccination is going in indigenous and quilombola communities. The immunization of children has been a challenge throughout Brazil and there is still a lack of quantitative data to measure its progress among the most vulnerable populations. Listening to people from these communities and developing stories focused on individual experiences could provide an insightful overview of the situation.

- These networks tend to strengthen communication flows so that high quality and accurate news reaches the most distant ends of information ecosystems through means of communication that are more accessible to communities, and that touch the most sensitive points of rumors.