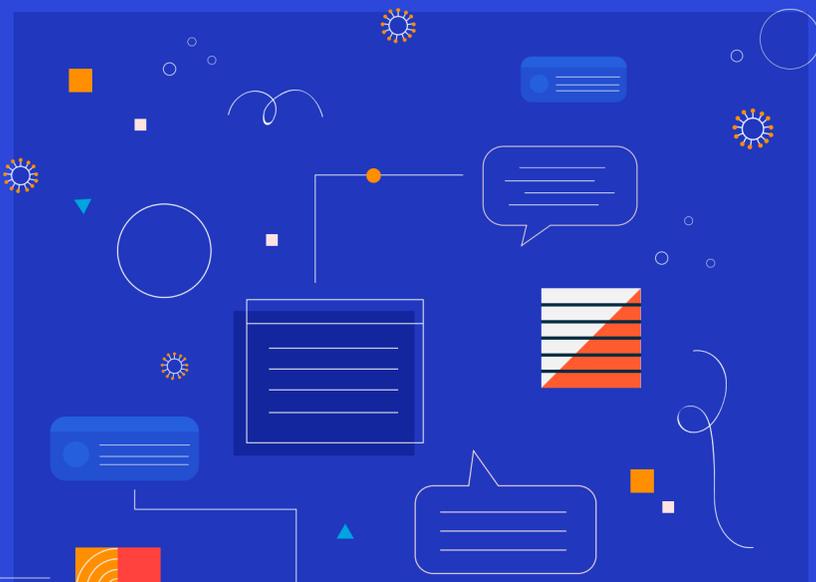


Territorial Dialogs

► **Bulletin for Humanitarian Organizations**
First Edition

Main topics for this edition:

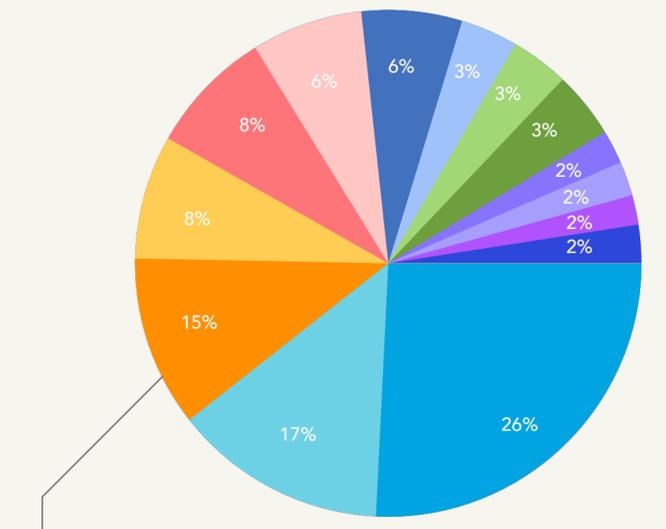
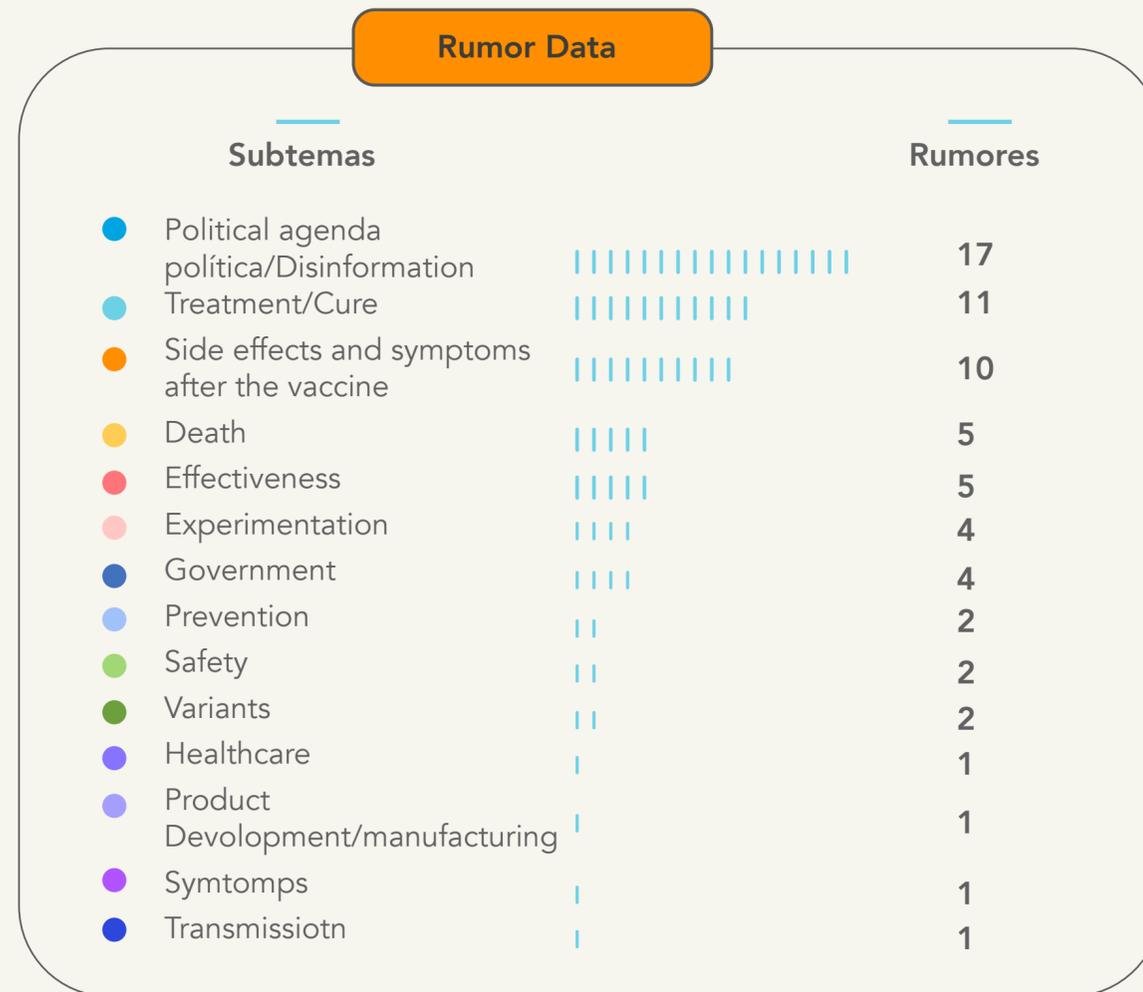
- Rooted in Trust 2.0 in Colombia. An overview.
- COVID-19 rumors and misinformation trends
- Recommendations and additional resources to respond to these rumors.



This is Rooted in Trust 2.0

Internews' [Rooted in Trust](#) funded by USAID, is an affirmative pandemic response program to counter the unprecedented scale and speed of the spread of rumors and misinformation about the COVID-19 virus in ten countries, including Colombia.

Building on the actions taken during the first installment of the project, which identified and responded to more than 3,600 rumors in the context of migrant and LGBTIQ+ populations ([click aquí para más información](#)) Rooted in Trust 2.0 will continue to strengthen the local capacity of multi-sectoral actors (humanitarian agencies, media, government, health professionals and community organizations) in the departments of Caquetá, Chocó, Putumayo and Vaupés, focusing particularly on ethnic populations, migrants and LGBTIQ+ people, to ensure that their COVID-19 information work is shaped and responsive to the needs of vulnerable communities already affected by humanitarian crises.



66 Total rumors

Information gathered between December 29, 2021, and February 14, 2022.

Information retrieved from

-  5 posts
-  3 messages
-  58 tweets

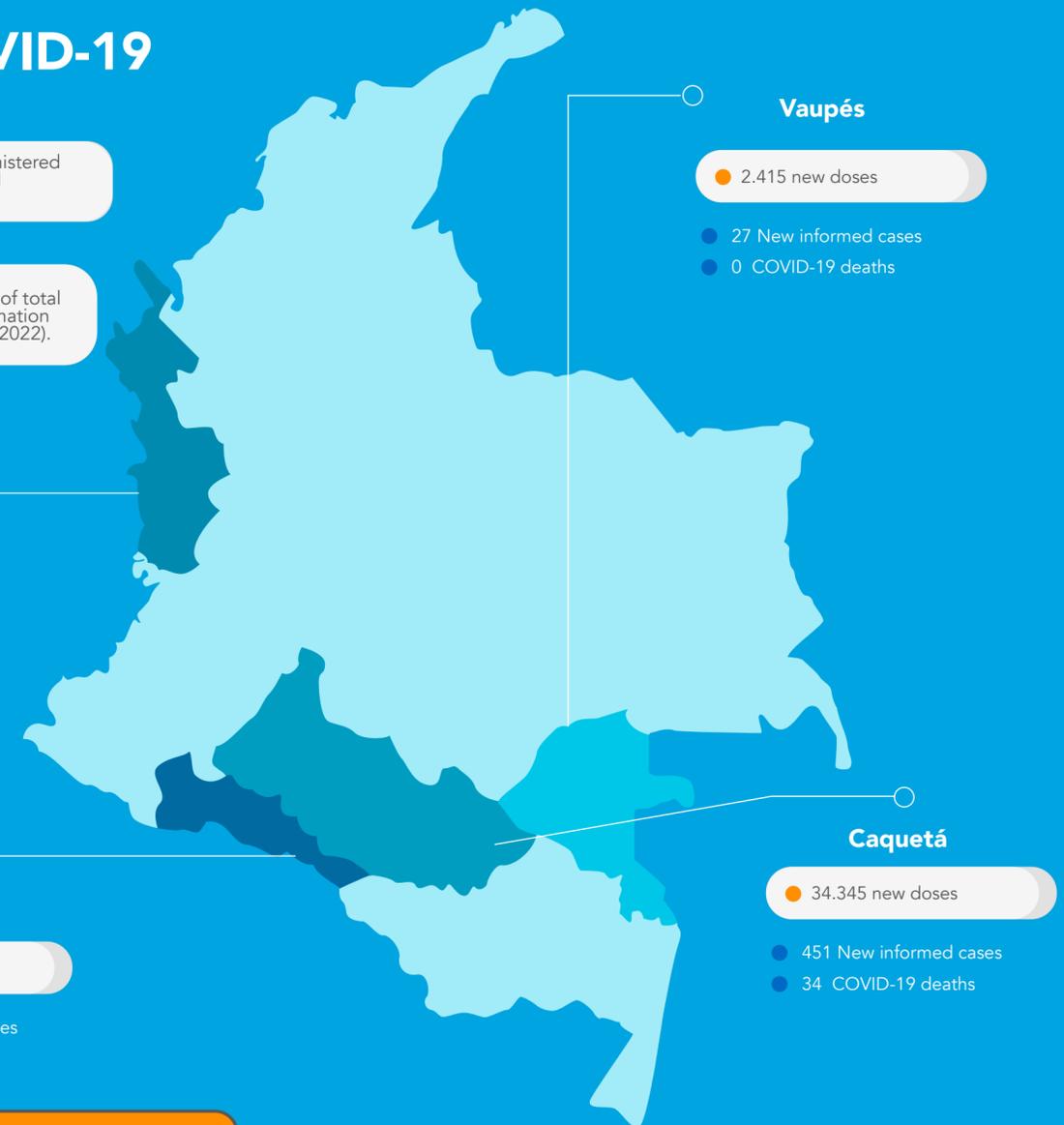
Datos de COVID-19



3'158.818 new doses administered in the last fortnightly period (between February 3-14, 2022)



32'850.895 persons (66.5% of total population) with a full vaccination scheme (as of February 17, 2022).



Events impacting local information ecosystems

Fires in 3,000+ hectares in Putumayo, Caquetá and Guaviare, the massive displacement of families and murders of social leaders in Medio San Juan, Chocó, and Puerto Leguizamo, Putumayo, the struggles for power between illegal groups in Puerto Asís, Putumayo and the massive recruitment of children and young people in Vaupés, are just some of the media events recorded in the last fifteen days, which shape and affect the social and community dynamics of the territory.

Eventos impactando los ecosistemas de información

Due to these events and considering Colombia's upcoming congressional and presidential elections, the Electoral Observation Mission (MOE) has warned of the high level of violence and possible electoral fraud in hundreds of municipalities in the country.

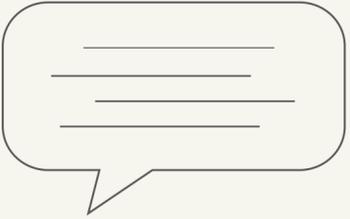
Data on new doses administered (as of February 1, 2022), deaths due to COVID-19 and new cases registered (as of February 20, 2022) provided by the Colombian Ministry of Health.

01.

Trend the "Plandemic"

“What Caracol doesn't tell you...

Two weeks before the world started talking about koby (late 2019) the U.S. Institute of Epidemiology (led by Fauci) signed a contract with the company Moderna to develop the vaccine against COVID-19. "



¿What's behind this rumor?

- These types of rumors are part of the "plandemic" trend, a theory used to blame the COVID-19 outbreak on big pharma, Bill Gates and the World Health Organization. The theory concludes that the outbreak is part of an agenda of political domination for the economic benefit of large pharmaceutical companies and nations of the global North.
- There is also a deep distrust of the traditional media, government institutions, the health system and the national vaccination scheme.

Why is this rumor important?

- The assumption that the pandemic is a fabrication invalidates the global public health emergency and the associated risks, while generating skepticism and doubt in the general public. General distrust has negative effects within local information ecosystems.



Data verification:

Upon performing a review in multiple verification portals such [PolitiFact](#) and [ColombiaCheck](#) we found that:

1.

There was no contract between both parties to develop the COVID-19 vaccine. What did exist was an agreement between the U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) and Moderna for the transfer of animal candidates to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to test mRNA vaccines for "Middle East Respiratory Syndrome", another type of Coronavirus known as MERS-CoV.



It is important to note that coronaviruses are a large family of viruses identified since the mid-1960s and that scientists around the world have been studying and developing ways to combat them since before SARS-CoV-2 emerged.

2.

While it is true that the agreement was implemented between December 12 and 16, 2019, i.e., a few weeks before the genetic sequence of the virus was made public (recall that this occurred on January 12, 2020), it makes no mention of SARS-CoV-2 or the development of a vaccine against COVID-19 as the rumor indicates.

3.

It was only until February 2020 that an amendment was made to this document to add mRNA vaccine candidates for other emerging viruses such as SARS-CoV-2, due to the timing.



The rumor in context



Moderna's mRNA vaccine in Colombia arrived in the country in June 2021, being the fifth vaccine to arrive.

According to official data from the Ministry of Health, since then



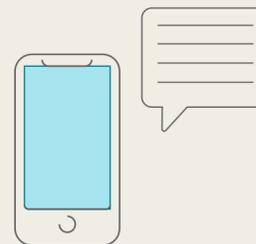
1'300.780 doses of this biologic have been applied (up to the last cut-off on January 21, 2022)

corresponding to 18% of the total number of vaccines applied to date.

18%



January 21, 2022



Since this period, a set of rumors and pieces of disinformation recycled from other publications already disproved mainly by verification media in the USA and Europe, began to gain strength again in the Colombian digital spectrum, framed under the theme of "plandemia".

Beyond the factual verification of these rumors, it is necessary to ask about the possible fears, apprehensions, needs, and other factors that may lead people to believe in them and even spread them, generating a vicious circle of misinformation. In this regard, some studies have referred, for example, to:

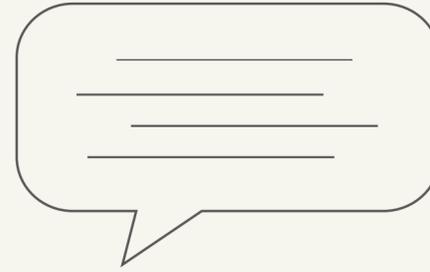
- Distrust towards vaccination in general and aspects such as political instability and religious extremism, ([De Figueredo, et al, 2020](#)) as well as socioeconomic and demographic factors ([Tram, et al, 2021](#)).
- In the specific case of COVID-19 vaccines, elements such as reluctance towards health systems and hospital care models, lack of knowledge or lack of information on health issues ([Turhan, et al, 2021](#)) and misinformation regarding COVID-19 ([Campo-Arias, et al, 2021](#)) seem to have fueled this type of beliefs ([Demuyakor, et al, 2021](#)).

02.

Trend Adverse effects of vaccines

“

"After this vaccination campaign we are seeing drops in the immune system, people getting infections and not responding to the usual treatments for those infections. People who catch their cold, their cold, otitis, pharyngitis... and you give them the antibiotics we give for that, and they don't work, and they perpetuate themselves."



¿What is behind this rumor?

- This rumor falls under a trend of "adverse vaccine factors," under which content is spread asserting the alleged harms or side effects of COVID-19 vaccines, concluding that it is unsafe.

¿Why is this rumor important?

- By focusing on alleged adverse effects, this type of rumor makes the positive elements of getting vaccinated invisible, while producing and feeding skepticism towards the actions of humanitarian organizations and the National Government regarding the national vaccination plan, considering that the vaccine is causing more harm than benefits for the population.
- Likewise, by disseminating content about the alleged harmful and even fatal effects of the COVID-19 vaccine, other health education processes and vaccination campaigns for other diseases at the local level could be truncated and seriously affected, so it is necessary to pay special attention to these trends and rumors.



Data verification:

While tracing the sources of the rumors, two pieces were found previously checked by Deutsche Welle (DW) and the (EPA) news agency, who notified EEA that:

1.

The rumor started by taking out of context part of the information provided in the academic article The BNT162b2 mRNA vaccine against SARS-CoV-2 reprograms both adaptive and innate immune responses. However, according to the authors, the evidence demonstrating the degree of efficiency of the vaccine against COVID-19 is clear and they clarify that the document does not mention that the vaccine against the virus weakens the human immune system. Finally, they reminded the reader that this is preliminary research and that the document has not yet been evaluated by academic peers.

2.

The European Medicines Agency (EMA) stated that the immune system is weakened after boosters. What the statement does mention is that "vaccines could be less effective if booster injections are continuously repeated (e.g., every four months), as "frequent and repeated immunizations with the same antigen".



What scientists and medical organizations say

A common concern within the communities is the possible adverse effect of vaccines against medical treatments against cancer or In Vitro Fertilization. In this regard, the following was found:

- For the **American Cancer Society**, the concern lies in the efficacy of the vaccine (and not it is safe), especially in people with weakened immune systems because some cancers and their treatments weaken the immune system to the point that it can make a vaccine less effective. While doctors are still researching this, the association recommends the vaccine because some vaccine protection is better than none.
- A **recent study** detailed that there is no evidence that mRNA vaccines against COVID-19 affect in vitro fertilization treatments. The authors noted that the vaccine did not affect patient performance or ovarian reserve in the immediate subsequent IVF cycle. However, they clarify that future larger studies with longer follow-up will be necessary to validate the findings found so far.



¿Why do these rumors go viral?

Conspiracy theories:



These arouse the interest of the audience by proposing a dominant narrative that does not tell the truth and invisibilizes the economic power dynamics at play in the pandemic.

Credibility



the people who post comments on social networks or disseminate this information in many cases are health personnel who have a credible and relatable voice within their community.

Lack of trust



in countries like Colombia, communities often have difficulty in accessing their basic rights and therefore there is a general lack of trust in the health system, the government and its institutions. Narratives about the harmful effects of the vaccine reinforce the belief that the public supply should not be trusted.



Recommendations

Public health and COVID-19 communication strategies for communities:

Should NOT

- x** Focus on sharing scientific data and information, using sources that may lack legitimacy within communities. This could undermine trust in the information shared due to factors such as distrust and non-conformity towards some institutions (such as traditional media, governmental entities, health systems and schemes, among others).
- x** Using technical language that is distant from people's context can generate more questions, doubts and even distrust (for example, saying or writing "biological" instead of "vaccine" or Sars-Cov-2 instead of "COVID-19").

they SHOULD:

- ✓ Recognize that in communities there are emotions and feelings that need to be considered when identifying and responding to concerns and information gaps vis-à-vis COVID-19.
- ✓ Promote spaces for dialogue and focus groups with the communities to clear up their doubts, applying pedagogical tools with simple, clear language adapted to their specific context.
- ✓ Carry out pedagogical and communication processes regarding the possible benefits and risks of a particular intervention, incorporating sources of information that are reliable for the communities, such as local testimonies that respond to the fears, claims and specific interests raised within the community.



- "Rooted in Trust 2.0 is tasked with identifying, collecting, analyzing and responding to rumors in 10 countries around the world, this with support from USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Affairs (BHA).
- We focus on providing journalists and humanitarian communicators with the necessary tools - in their preferred languages - to combat rumors and misinformation in the context of the COVID-19 crisis.



or more information about the project, please visit:

internews.org



If you would like to give us your feedback against this newsletter and/or the "Rooted in Trust 2.0" project, please feel free to write to us via email at jsandovalvasco@internews.org.

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We would very much like to know your opinion in order to adjust future content pieces.

QR with questionnaire



¡Gracias!

