



The Humanitarian Bulletin

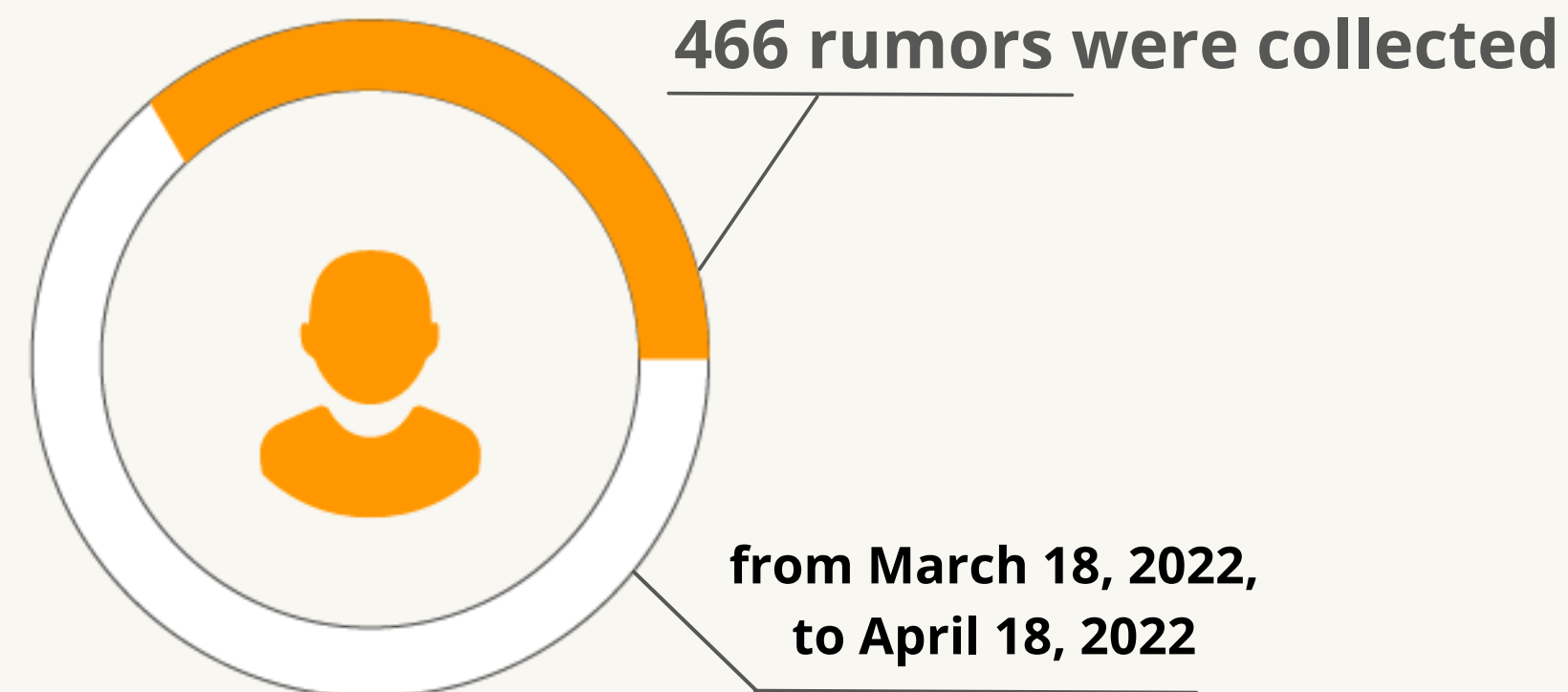
Zimbabwe
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ISSUE 3

About Rooted in Trust

Rooted in Trust 2.0 is a global pandemic information response program funded by the USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID-BHA) and implemented by Internews to counter the unprecedented scale and speed of the spread of rumors and misinformation on COVID-19 and COVID-19 vaccines.

Rooted in Trust 2.0 in Zimbabwe is working with media, community-based organizations and health and humanitarian actors to build a healthier information ecosystem that is responsive to the needs of migrant communities in Southern Zimbabwe, particularly in the provinces of Matabeleland North, Matabeleland South, Midlands, Masvingo and Bulawayo. Our work focuses on vulnerable groups within these communities, especially on women and youth.

Rumor data overview March 18 – April 18 2022



Internews Zimbabwe collected 466 rumors

from Social media. **45%** of the rumors are about wearing masks, mainly noting that they are ineffective or should be abolished. **17%** of the rumors were about the discovery of the new COVID-19 variant and regarding it as fake or a hoax. Other popular themes were that COVID-19 is a hoax (**16%** of rumors), COVID-19 is endemic (**12%**), and that government is using COVID-19 to limit travel rights (**10%**). **53%** of the rumors were collected from Facebook while 47% were collected from Twitter.



Senziwani Ndlovu
Project Manager



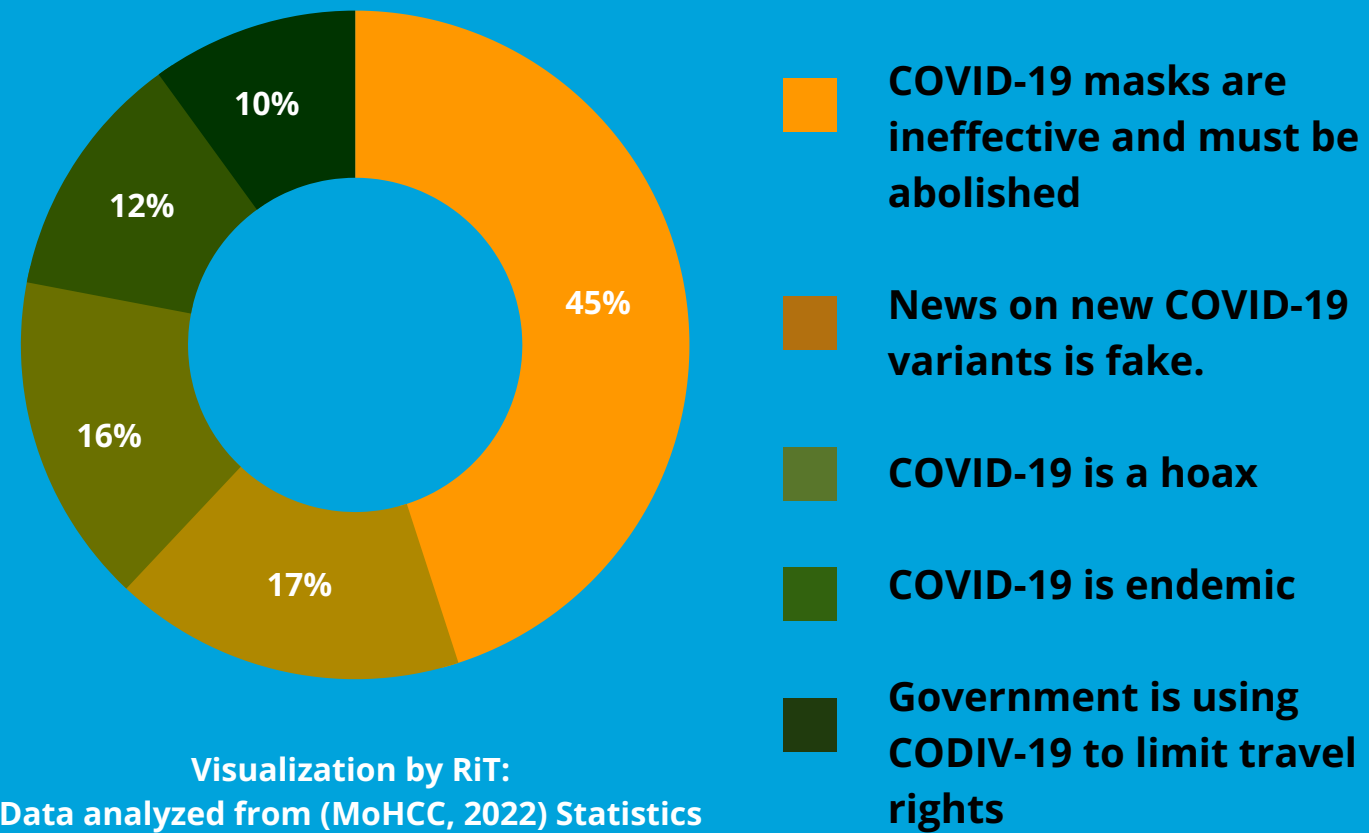
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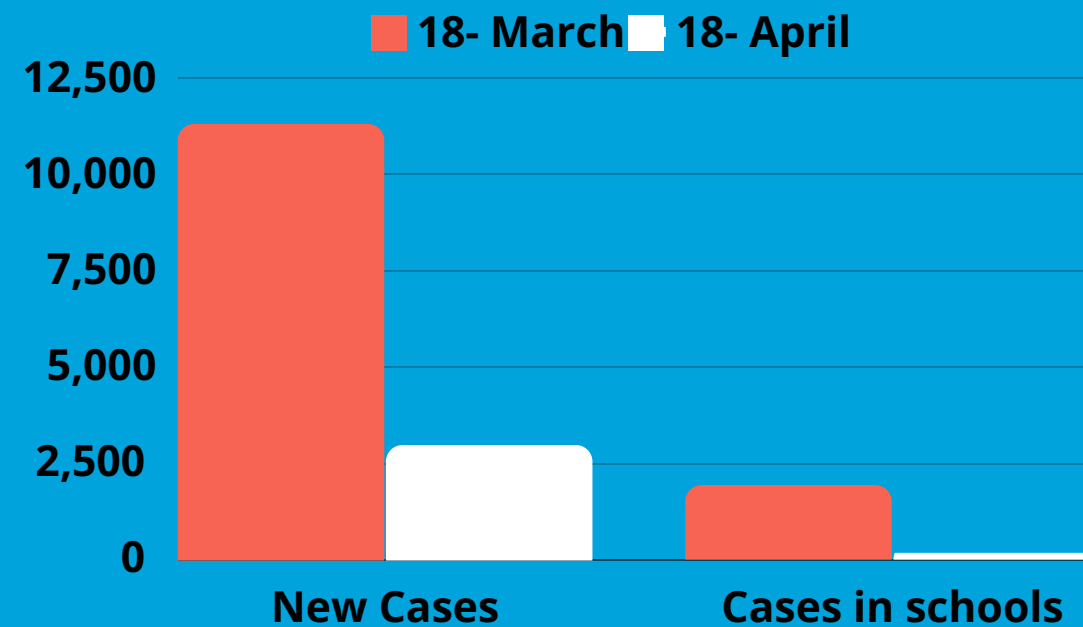
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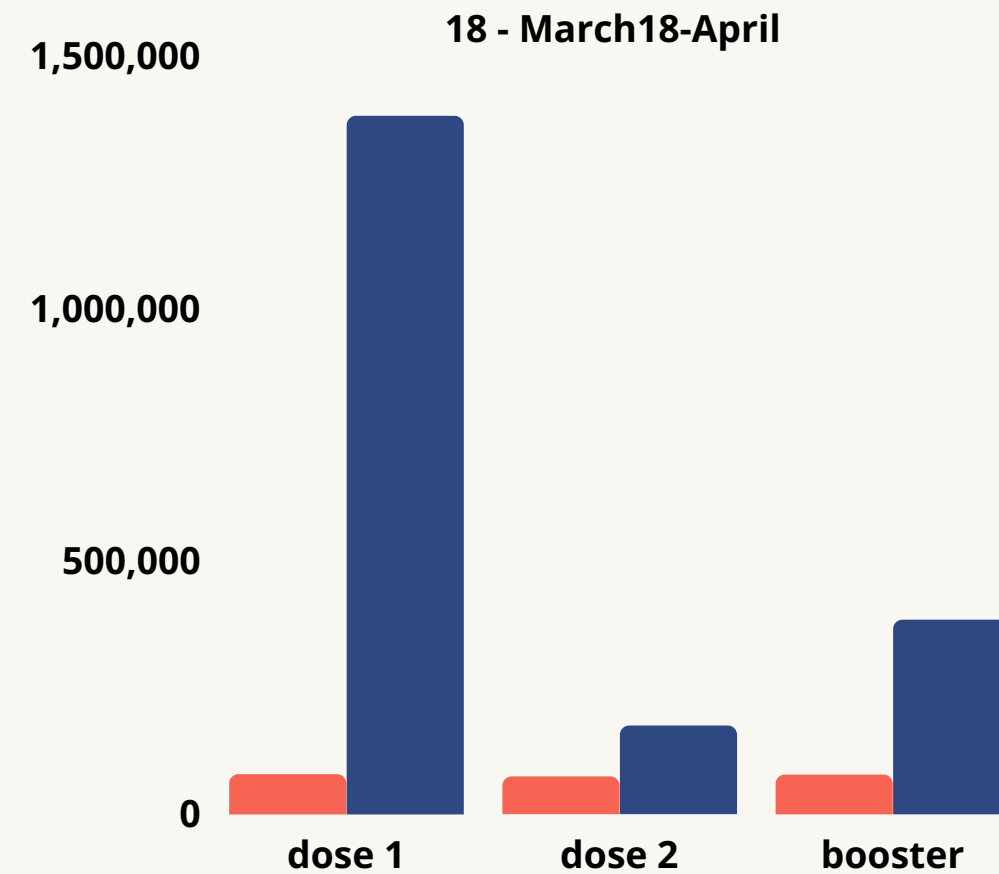
Trending rumor themes



COVID-19 situation overview in the country



Rumor data overview



There were 2986 new cases recorded in the reporting period, a decrease of 278% from 11,288 reported last month.


Cases in schools have dropped to 177 cases from 1929 reported last month. The decrease in school cases is due to the fact that school holidays started on the 7th of April.

Visualization by RiT :
Data from RiT Humanitarian Dashboard


There was a sharp increase in vaccination with 1,381,210 people getting the jab compared to 79,717 who received the same last month. The increase was due to the vaccination blitz targeting children over the age of 12.


There was a notable increase in the number of people that accessed the 3rd dose vaccine with 384,520 people accessing the vaccine compared to 78,603 last month.

This is a percentage increase of 389% and can be attributed to the travel requirements announced by the government that people who have received their full vaccines could now cross the borders without a PCR test while those without full vaccination still require a PCR Test.



Fact check





COVID-19 has not been eradicated as evidenced by the new variant Omicron B.A.4 and B.A.5 which was detected in Botswana recently. Zimbabwe remains on high alert to deal with the possible spread of the new variant into the country.

Zimbabwe has not achieved its target of 60 percent herd immunity (9,400,000 people vaccinated with the 2 doses) with the number of vaccinated people standing at 5,794,196 (first dose), 3,615,160 (second dose) and 567,093 (booster shot) as of April 19, 2022. In India there are fears of a looming fourth wave following an increase in new cases. China is currently also under a lock down following a surge in COVID-19 cases.

Recommendations

- **Humanitarian actors that are involved in COVID-19 RCCE**, currently need to actively engage communities, through community dialogues with women and youth, to continuously give them the latest trends on COVID-19 to ensure adherence to WHO prevention protocols.
- **Partners working with communities can engage community-based radio stations** and have weekly sessions with updates on COVID-19 trends and latest developments in local languages such as Ndebele, Shona, Venda, Tonga & Nambya. This is to ensure that communities are kept abreast of the latest developments.



01.

Why does it matter?

The rumor downplays COVID-19 and has connotations of questioning its existence, by asking the main themes that were topical around the pandemic such as herd immunity.

The rumor therefore has the implication of encouraging communities to relax and not adhere to COVID-19 prevention protocols. It has underlying sarcasm towards extensive media reports on COVID-19 vaccination and herd immunity which the media has suddenly become quiet about, implying that maybe these topics were never actually important.

It can further fuel the assumptions that some people in the community have always had about whether COVID-19 even really exists. This rumor is important because it points to the needs of the community: continued updates and accurate information about COVID-19 even while many media outlets assume that there is exhaustion around the topic.



Rumor Trend

“ So, is COVID over?? Do we have herd immunity? What's the latest science. It's no longer on the news at all. (Twitter March 29, 2022) ”

THEME:
Post COVID-19

What's behind the rumor?

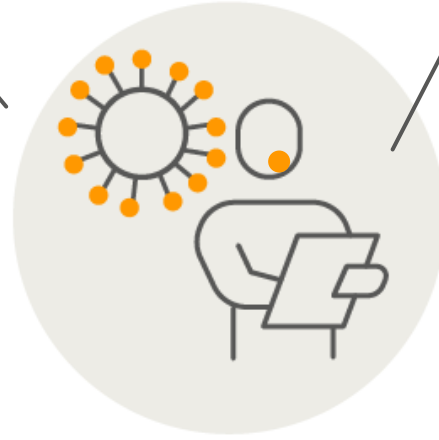
The rumor is emanating from the fact that the media is now generally quiet on COVID-19 issues and the attention is now focused on the Ukraine war. This makes it appear as if COVID-19 is no longer a threat, despite the current rising cases in China and the announcement by a local newspaper, New Zimbabwe, of a possible new variant. This rumor is questioning why there are no latest developments on COVID-19 being reported and implies that COVID-19 might be over.



Internews
Local voices. Global change.

Fact check

PCR testing is no longer a requirement for international travellers in several countries including Botswana, South Africa, India, Canada and Australia following the worldwide decrease in the number of COVID-19 cases and the increase in the number of fully vaccinated people.



Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) tests are considered by scientists to be a highly reliable tool for diagnosing COVID-19. Social media posts discrediting the reliability of PCR tests and alleging them to be outdated have been dismissed as false.

Recommendations

- **Health Partners can work together with the immigration department to** have sensitization campaigns where the Government protocols for entering or leaving the country are indicated, and the importance of being vaccinated is reinforced to the migrant community
- **Humanitarian actors that engage** with the migrant community can collect concerns of this community pertaining to the Government protocols in relation to the reopening of borders, prepare and distribute fliers with frequently asked questions, with answers in local languages such as Venda, Tonga, Ndebele, Shona and Nambya.

02.

Rumor Trend

Great move. Now please scrap the ridiculously outdated exit PCR. The countries we travel to don't need tests anymore, but you want us to show a PCR. Smacks of money making and needs to stop. (Twitter March 29, 2022)



THEME: Travel

What's behind the rumor

The rumor is emanating from the Government announcement (March 29, 2022) through the Ministry of Information, Publicity and Broadcasting after a post cabinet briefing, where it was stated that all returning residents and visitors are no longer required to present a negative PCR certificate on arrival at ports. Only a valid vaccination certificate showing that they are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 will suffice. This announcement has been further enforced through the Government Statutory Instrument 67 of 2022, which substantiated the statement made by the Ministry of Information.

Why does it matter?

This rumor is important as it shows a mistrust of Government policies by people as it indicates that the Government wants to make money, from the PCR tests. It has the implication of creating confusion amongst people who will be travelling and crossing borders, as they will not know what exactly is required. The rumor can further have the damage to communities as it leads them to believe that PCR tests are not accurate.