

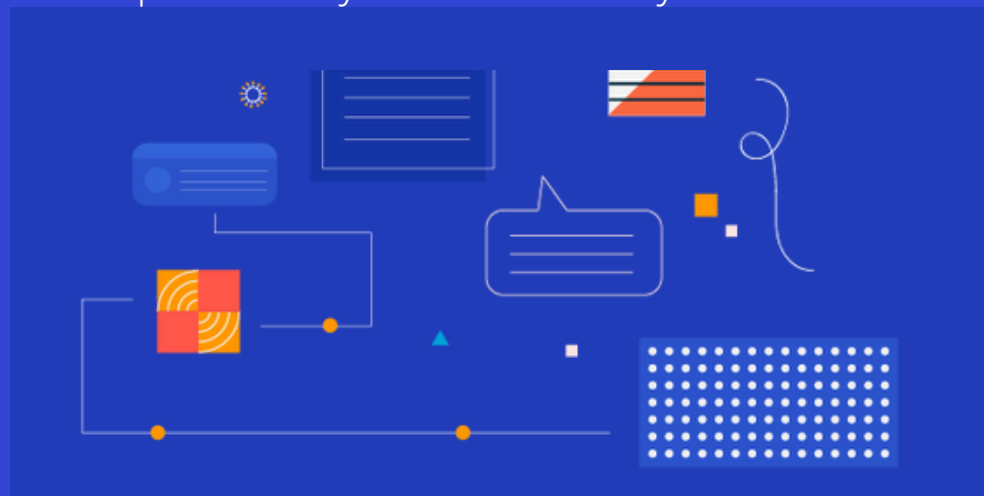


## ►Mali Humanitarian Bulletin # 2

March 2022

### Theme trends

- Rumors covered in this newsletter include concerns about the efficacy of vaccines and their supposed side effects, as well as doubts about the existence of the disease.
- This regular collection of information from the community is intended to provide recommendations to humanitarian and public health agencies so that they can integrate it into their risk communication activities and align them with the perspectives and information needs expressed by the community.



## Rooted in Trust au Mali

The Rooted in Trust project aims to stop 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, vaccination, pandemic impacts, and the COVID-19 response on social media and in face-to-face activities, particularly among displaced populations and host communities in the District of Bamako and in the regions of Sikasso, Segou, Mopti, Gao, and Timbuktu.

### Methodology

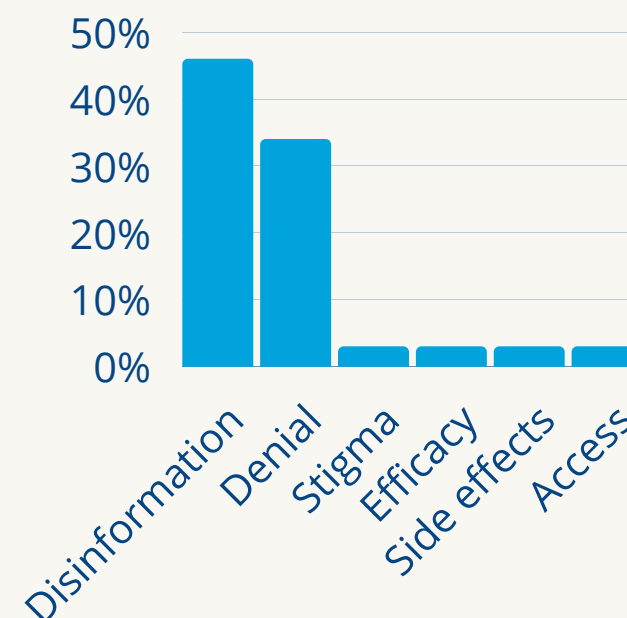
This month, the data collection was mainly done through the monitoring of social media platforms and spaces where communities are active (Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, posts, comments and stories). The collected data is cleaned, analyzed and categorized under a theme and according to a risk level.

The selection for this report card is based on a risk assessment matrix taking into account the frequency of the theme, the credibility of the rumor, and the potential impact on the community and humanitarian and health services.

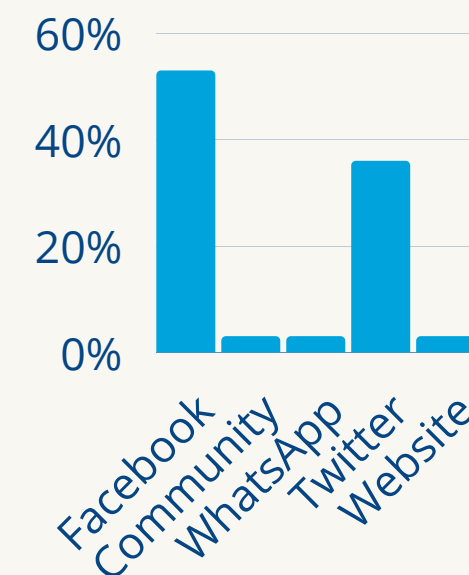


## 98 rumors collected

Top themes



Sources of rumors



# Covid-19 situation

## 31-03-2022 - Mali



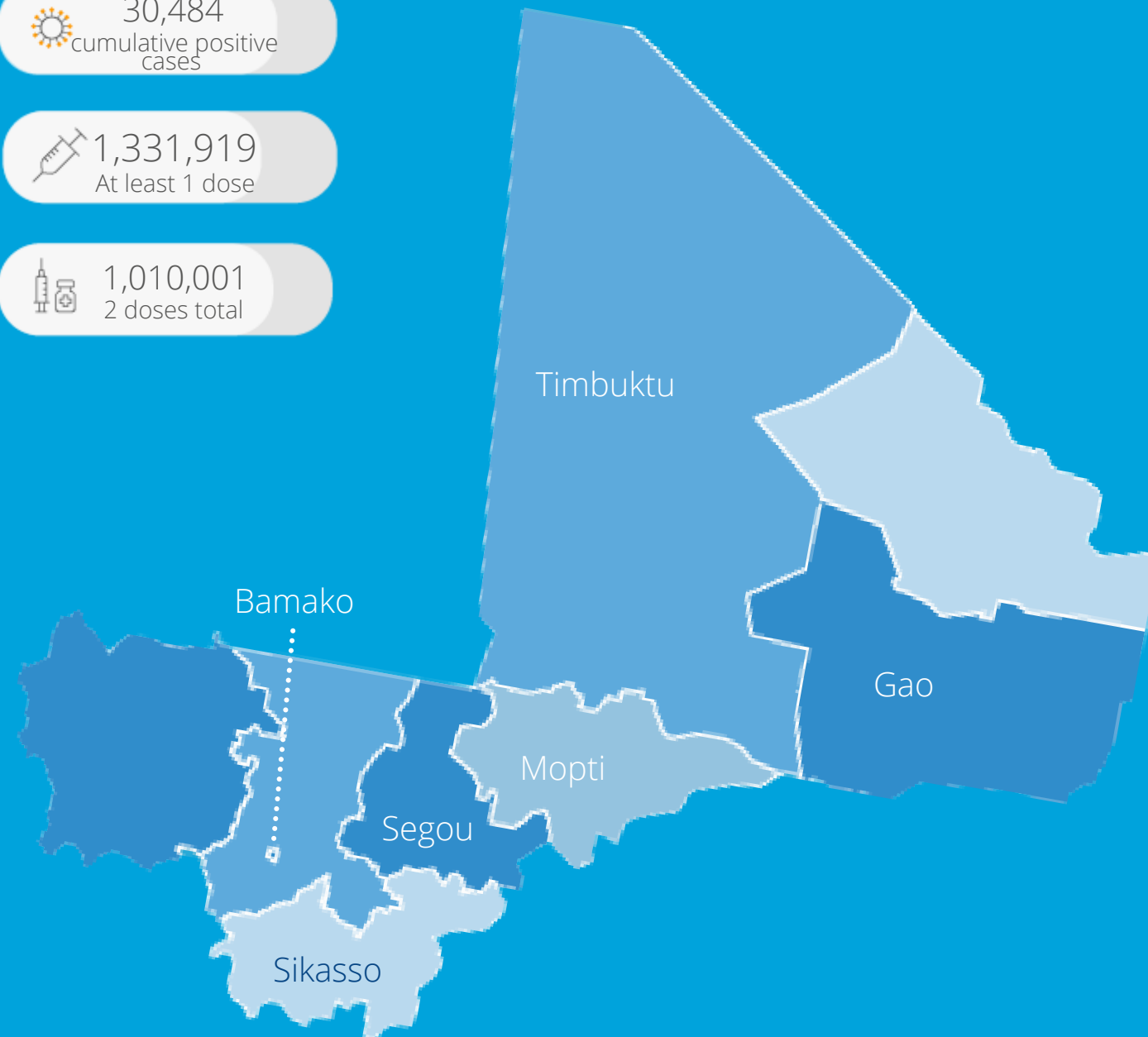
30,484  
cumulative positive  
cases



1,331,919  
At least 1 dose



1,010,001  
2 doses total



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## Efficacy and safety of vaccines

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“ So what's the point of being vaccinated if the vaccine doesn't protect you? A vaccine that is not preventive is a poison.” Twitter

“But why 1 dose, 2 doses, why all that if it is very effective and why given all these doses taken it does not prevent contamination ? ” Facebook

“ Hey stop this vaccine, in 10 years all the people who had this vaccine will die. God will be my witness ” Facebook

## What's behind the rumor?

In a general context of COVID-19 denial or fatigue, concerns about the safety and efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines, and even their questioning, are increasingly perceptible in conversations and especially on social networks.

The possibility of contracting the virus even with partial or complete vaccination is a concern and is seen as a sign of the vaccine's ineffectiveness. In the same way, the number of doses required per vaccine also fuels discourses that minimize the usefulness of the vaccine.



## Fact checking

The easing of travel restrictions or testing measures in many countries also suggests that "COVID is behind us. The widespread coverage of the war in Ukraine at the expense of the pandemic has also contributed to the reinforcement of negative opinions and perceptions about the existence of the disease and the usefulness of vaccines.s.



The idea that vaccines do not prevent the virus but "only" limit its severe effects and spread seems to support some of the claims and beliefs that there are political and commercial interests behind the pandemic.

The fact is that in most cases, the vaccine is a key tool to significantly reduce the number of people who develop severe forms of the disease or die from it.

Despite a significant decrease in positive cases in Mali, the pandemic is still present. In addition, resurgent outbreaks have been observed in several countries and WHO is warning of the possibility of a new wave.

Mali has just received the first 100,620 doses of Pfizer vaccine (out of a total of 1,082,250 expected) from the United States through the COVAX facility in order to continue its vaccination program. This program will be expanded to include new vulnerable targets, namely pregnant and lactating women.

Source :

- Ministry of Health, Fight against COVID-19: 100,620 doses of Pfizer vaccine offered by the United States to Mali. March 22, 2022  
Read the press release

## Why it's important?

- This could contribute to communities' frustration and rejection of immunization and preventive measures, thus threatening the work and interventions of humanitarian and health response actors, and also increasing the risk of additional acute crises and vulnerabilities.
- Faced with such claims, communities may be discouraged and reluctant to complete their vaccination regimen, especially if accessibility/availability of doses to be administered is not guaranteed at vaccination centers or through mobile clinics in all regions.
- In the face of a possible new global wave of the disease announced by WHO, hesitation or refusal to vaccinate may lead to fears of rapid spread of the disease or variants and more severe cases requiring hospitalization, especially in more vulnerable communities.



## Recommendations

- **Encourage participatory approaches to involve communities, their representatives and local stakeholders** in risk communication and community engagement strategies. This promotes better recognition and consideration of local needs and concerns, and potentially better understanding and adherence to immunization and other prevention measures.
- **Share the latest information about the disease and immunization to keep people informed and maintain trust.** This information should be transparent and tailored to community contexts. Remind people of the role of immunization and preventive measures and the consequences of being immunized or not for themselves and for community members. Testimonials from fully and partially vaccinated people, if possible from the community, can be included in such activities.
- **Integrate community and outreach media as much as possible into community engagement strategies** around immunization and other preventive measures. This can be done by setting up a framework for regular exchanges with local media to share information that meets the specific needs of the population.

46% of the rumors of the month are related to the themes of denial of the existence of the disease and conspiracy theories.

The socio-political situation in Mali and current international events seem to influence and be reflected in the discourse on COVID-19 and vaccination.

Pro-Russian and anti-western political references are increasingly present in the discussions. Vaccines and the virus are seen as instruments of Western political and commercial interests.

This could suggest forms of expression/claims of people's concerns about the socio-political situation in the country; COVID-19 or the war in Ukraine would be catalysts used to express underlying problems and priorities.

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## Secondary effects

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“ Vaccine changes human DNA permanently!  
Welcome to transhumanism! ” Twitter,

### Useful resource

ViralFacts Africa :  
[Functioning of mRNA vaccines](#)

## What's behind the rumor?

Controversial messages about possible modifications of the human genetic heritage by messenger RNA vaccines continue to circulate on social networks. These publications, mainly from abroad, are being relayed in Mali and are contributing to misinformation and confusion about this vaccine technology, which was little known to the general public until recently, when messenger RNA vaccines had not yet been introduced in Mali.



## Fact checking

The vaccines using this technology are Moderna and Pfizer/BioNTech. The vaccines used in Mali to date are Johnson & Johnson, AstraZeneca, Sinovac and Sinopharm. The country just received a first supply of 100,620 doses of Pfizer's COVAX vaccine on March 18, which will allow the campaign to continue in the coming weeks.



The messenger RNA technology, tested for the first time on a large scale, has been known to scientists for decades. The urgency of the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated research to develop safe vaccines quickly.

The messenger RNA vaccine works by releasing a temporary copy of the coronavirus' genetic material. The purpose of the vaccine is to teach our body and immune system to make what it needs to fight the virus on its own.

Messenger RNA never reaches the nucleus of the cells where our DNA is located, so it cannot change it in any way.

## Why it's important?

- This type of discourse may reinforce vaccine hesitancy among unvaccinated or partially vaccinated individuals.
- The introduction of the Pfizer vaccine in Mali may be jeopardized by resistance to this messenger RNA vaccine. The announcement of the receipt of the Pfizer vaccine has already sparked numerous reactions on social networks.
- Humanitarian and health responses around COVID-19 and other emergency or routine immunization programs may be impacted, putting populations at risk.

## Recommendations



- **Multiply the spaces for dialogue** and communication activities with communities to mitigate their fears and the impacts of misinformation on the immunization campaign. This will be particularly crucial as the next national communication campaign for the introduction of the Pfizer vaccine in Mali gets underway.
- **Support capacity building of community stakeholders** - traditional communicators, local representatives, frontline workers, so that they are able to regularly communicate appropriate information on immunization, vaccines and the pandemic.

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## Other rumor trends

### Potential impacts on humanitarian and health responses

*"We don't want any more of these NGOs, the Westerners integrate their agents of intelligence services by telling us that it is the NGOs"*  
Facebook

Diplomatic tensions between Mali and some Western countries, as well as frustrations and doubts about access, administration, and effectiveness of vaccines or rejection of the disease, may contribute to a loss of confidence in vaccination and other preventive measures. This loss of confidence could be transposed to international humanitarian organizations involved in the COVID-19 response, as well as to other ongoing or future humanitarian and health responses in support of national authorities. This could undermine the effectiveness of the COVID response and slow vaccine uptake and coverage, putting both the exposed populations and humanitarian workers at risk.

It is important to quickly detect, understand, and respond to these types of perceptions, which may mask deeper problems or needs within communities. Fostering greater accountability to affected populations by putting communities at the center of strategies and actions can help build trust between communities and aid workers, mitigating this type of discourse and the risks to communities and frontline workers.

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Rooted in Trust collects, analyzes and responds to rumors in 10 countries with the generous support of USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA). Our goal is to provide humanitarian journalists and communicators with the tools they need, in the languages they prefer, to fight rumors and misinformation in the COVID-19 crisis. For more information about the project, visit [www.internews.org](http://www.internews.org).



**Want to give us feedback, get involved or share data?  
Get in touch with us!**

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