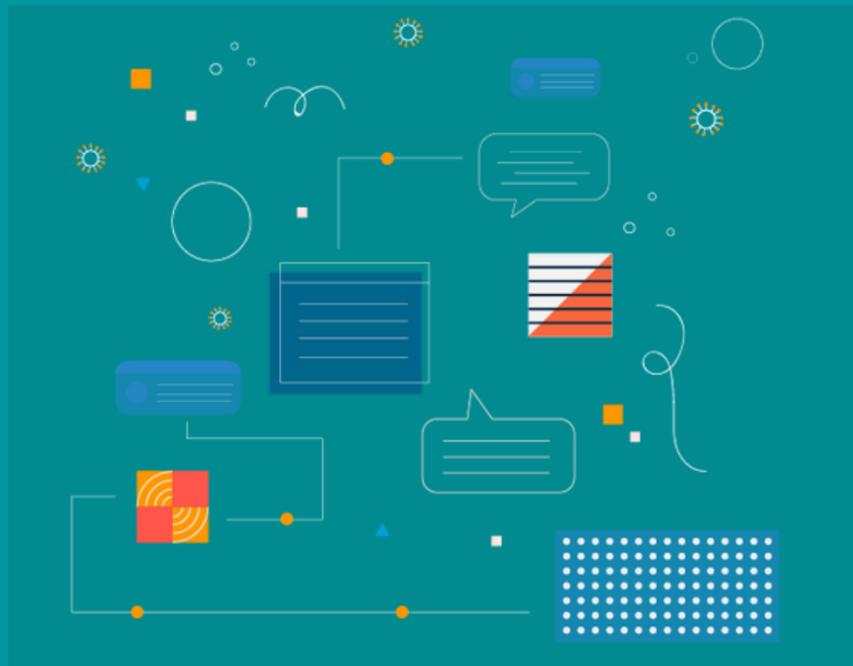


Measles Rumors

▶ Afghanistan Humanitarian Bulletin #2, 2022 (March-May)

2 key themes

- Vaccine efficacy: Is measles vaccine less effective or low quality?
- Measles risk: Isn't measles a dangerous disease?

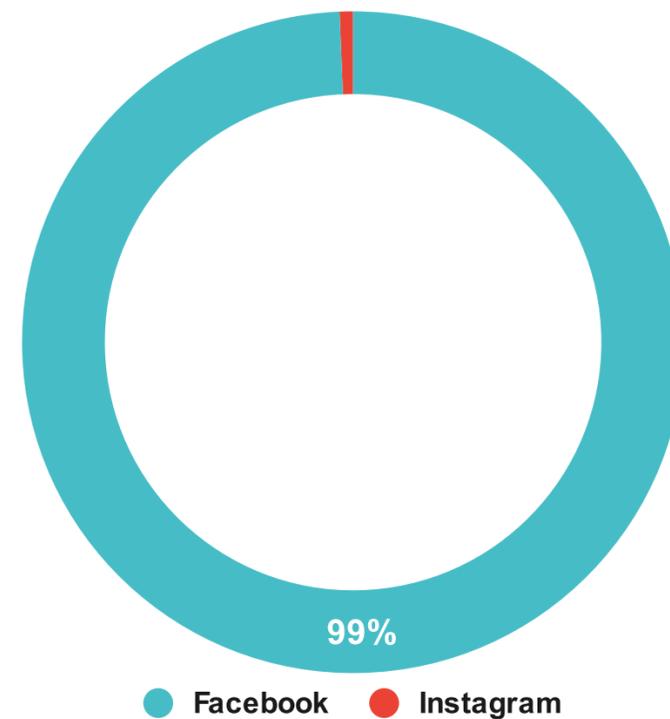


This is Rooted in Trust

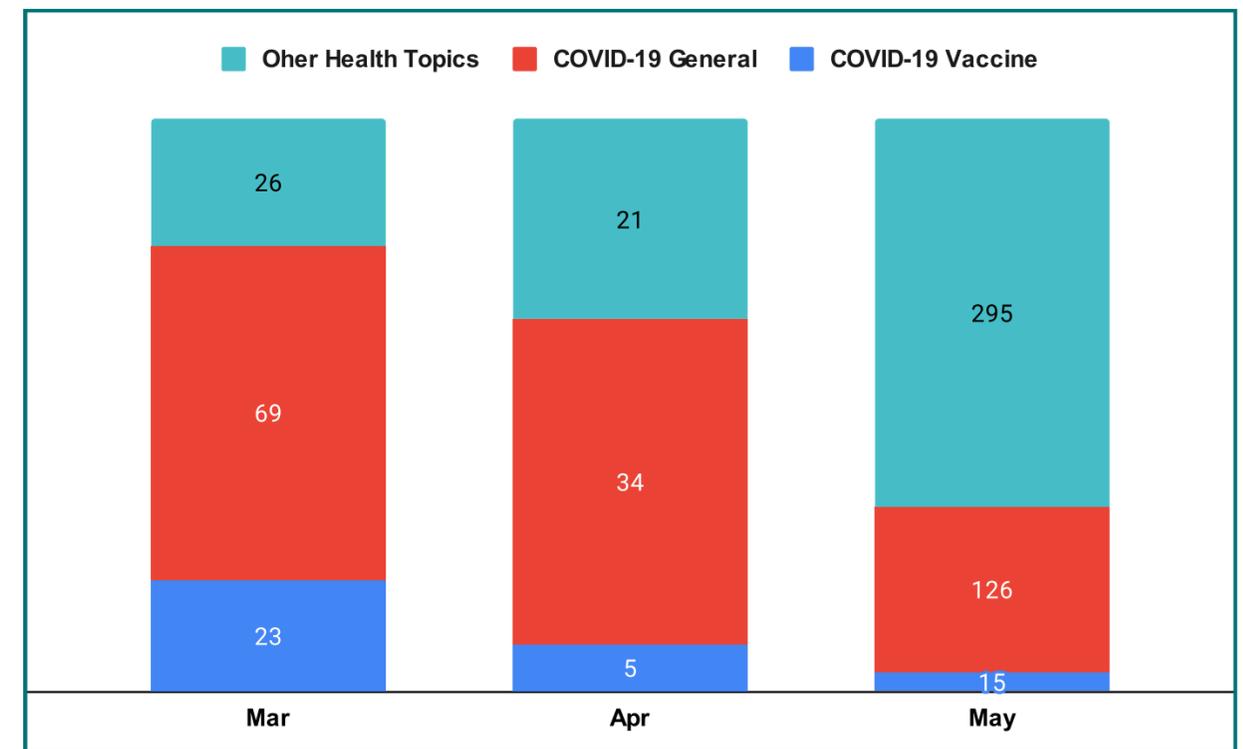
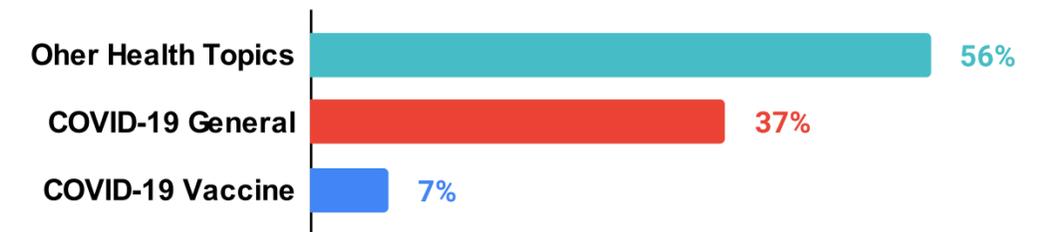
Rooted in Trust (RiT) is a USAID BHA-funded project run by Internews to support humanitarian, public health agencies and local media to combat and manage the spread of rumors and misinformation about COVID-19. This regular collection of community insights aims to provide humanitarian and public health agencies ideas to integrate and align their risk communication activities with community perspectives and provide information according to the needs to the community. In Afghanistan, Internews is collaborating with local media partners and the Risk Communication and Community Engagement Sub-Working Group (RCCE SWG).

In this rumor bulletin we highlighted rumors questioning the efficacy of the measles vaccine and claiming that the measles is not dangerous. Our data shows that such rumors keep repeating on Afghanistan's social media platforms. We have also recorded other rumor trends on measles, which we will analyze and discussed in our next content products.

 **614 rumors collected**



Rumor sources



Rumors: Important themes

Measles snapshot May 2022*



 **52,287**
cases

 **3,16**
deaths

Measles news events

News, events & announcements that may impact online discourse in March-May

1 In a report, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) stated that Afghanistan, behind Somalia and Yemen, had the third highest number of measles cases.

2 The Ministry of Public Health has expressed concern about the increase in measles cases in Afghanistan, saying that the number of measles cases has now doubled across the country. According to the ministry, most cases have been registered in Kunduz, Kabul and Helmand provinces.

3 According to the Ministry of Public health, the measles vaccination campaigns were taking place in March to May 2022 in different parts the country.

*Total figures as of June 04, 2022

01.

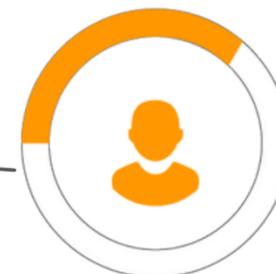
Measles Vaccine Efficacy

Example:

“ Hey people, the quality of vaccine is very low. Those who have taken measles vaccine are now suffering from the most severe measles. ”



Spread in Dari through Facebook pages



02.

Is Measles Dangerous?

Example:

“ No one dies because of measles. ”



Spread in Dari through Facebook pages



What's behind the rumor?

As the measles outbreak has been widely reported by national and international media, Afghan social media users have extensively discussed the issue on various social media channels and have spread some rumors. Our data from March to May 2022 showed some rumors questioning the efficacy of measles' vaccine saying that children were infected after they got vaccinated.

Other rumors understated the risk of measles and claimed that the disease doesn't kill anyone. These rumors have appeared in all social media platforms, but extensively discussed on Facebook, which is a dominant platform for social media users in Afghanistan. The misinformation discussed while the level of trust to vaccines is low among people, particularly in rural areas.

The COVID-19 pandemic might have contributed to fears and concerns over the treatments of other diseases. In the past two years there has been many rumors about the COVID-19 vaccines and its origins which might have increased citizens' overall mistrust on health systems and on vaccines for other diseases including measles.

Why does it stick?

The rumors have the potential to discourage parents from vaccinating their children and play upon low literacy levels. Mistrust in the health care system and the mistrust in vaccines having a connection with the long-term anti-West sentiment, can contribute to an increase in the number of deaths and continued spread of measles. These rumors can add another layer to the current humanitarian crises in Afghanistan and in particular the health challenges that the Afghan children are struggling with.

Content you can use

-  [Measles - number of reported cases](#)
-  [Afghanistan: Health Cluster | ReliefWeb Response](#)
-  [Measles | UNICEF Afghanistan](#)
-  [Transmission of Measles](#)
-  [Vaccine for Measles](#)



Fact check

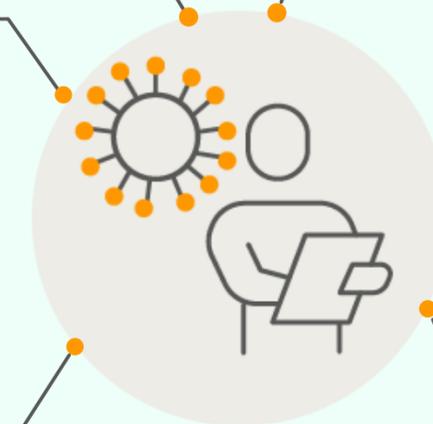
Routine measles vaccination for children, as well as mass immunization campaigns in countries with high case and death rates, are important public health measures for reducing worldwide measles fatalities. For nearly 60 years, the measles vaccination has been in use. It's risk-free, cost-effective, and easy to use. [WHO](#)

Despite the availability of a safe and cost-effective vaccine, more than 140 000 people died from measles in 2018, the majority of whom were children under the age of five. Between 2000 and 2018, global measles fatalities decreased by 73 percent due to vaccination. Measles vaccination avoided an estimated 23.2 million deaths. [WHO](#)

Many measles-related deaths are caused by the disease's complications. Children under the age of 5 and adults over the age of 30 are more likely to have serious problems. Blindness, encephalitis (a brain infection that causes swelling), severe diarrhea and dehydration, ear infections, or severe respiratory infections like pneumonia are among the most dangerous effects. Severe measles is more common in undernourished young children, especially those who are deficient in vitamin A or who have had their immune systems affected by HIV/AIDS or other illnesses. [WHO](#)

A high fever, which usually occurs 10 to 12 days after exposure to the virus and lasts 4 to 7 days, is the initial symptom of measles. In the early stages, symptoms like a runny nose, cough, red and watery eyes, and little white patches within the cheeks may appear. A rash appears after a few days, generally on the face and upper neck. The rash expands over 3 days, eventually reaching the hands and feet. The rash appears for 5 to 6 days before disappearing. The rash appears 14 days after being exposed to the virus on average (within a range of 7 to 18 days). [WHO](#)

About three out of 100 who receive two doses of the measles vaccine will still contract the disease if exposed to the virus. Its cause is unclear to experts. Perhaps the vaccine didn't have the desired effect on their immune systems as it should have. The good news is that those with complete immunity who contract measles appear to be more likely to experience a milder disease. Additionally, those who have received their full recommended dose of vaccines are less likely to transfer the illness to others, particularly those who are too young or have compromised immune systems to receive the vaccine. [CDC](#)



Why does it matter?

- The rumor “No one dies because of measles” can encourage parents not to take the disease seriously, which may cause an increase in the number of deaths and spread of outbreak to other communities.
- The rumors can increase the level of mistrust to vaccines among people and can help parents avoid vaccinating their children.
- These and other similar rumors, which have continued to be discussed on social media can be easily spread into local communities and may create a major obstacle to successful immunization campaigns in the country.
- Most Afghan children are suffering from high levels of malnutrition meaning that they are at a higher risk of developing severe measles.
- These rumors can be exacerbating the risks of an already vulnerable population.

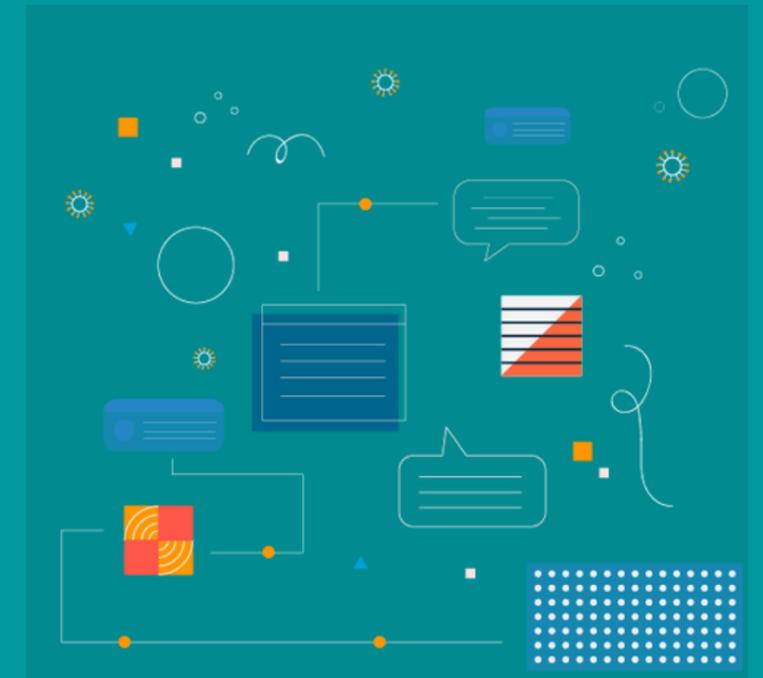
Recommendations



- Humanitarian Organizations can work with community influencers to raise awareness about risk or measles and the benefits of measles vaccine to the children.
- Humanitarian and health agencies may work with national and local media outlets to increase awareness among people across the country.
- Through producing the disseminating communication tools, humanitarian organizations can encourage parents to vaccinate their children against measles.
- By recruiting female community mobilizers, humanitarian organizations can raise awareness in communities and encourage mothers to vaccinate their children.



We would love your feedback on this product! Contact us also to join our mailing list, collaborate and share data. Please contact Mir Rohullah Sadat, Senior Program Coordinator, Internews at msadat@internews.org.



Rooted in Trust is collecting, analyzing and responding to rumors in 10 countries with generous support from USAID's Bureau of Humanitarian Affairs (BHA). We focus on equipping journalists and humanitarian communicators with the tools they need, in the languages they prefer, to combat rumors and misinformation in the COVID-19 crisis.

