



THE HUMANITARIAN SNAPSHOT

A product which provides a quick snapshot, on health rumour data, analysis and recommendations in Zimbabwe.



“Kunews kuthwa iCorona
kayiseyiyo emergency Yi
WHO, badlala ngathi ngoba
vele ayizange I ekhona.”

(Ndebele , Mat. South)

TRANSLATION:

“Information in the news says that COVID-19 is no longer an emergency by WHO. They think we are fools because it was never there anyways.”

Facts

The rumour follows the May 5, 2023, World Health Organisation (WHO)'s director general, Dr Tedros Ghebreyesus announcement that COVID-19 was no longer a public health emergency due to increased population immunity from vaccination and infection, and decreased mortality and pressure on health systems.

The rumour highlights the challenge of public skepticism and misinformation towards COVID-19 which may contribute to laxity towards the virus and reversal of progress made towards ensuring the country is safe from the pandemic.

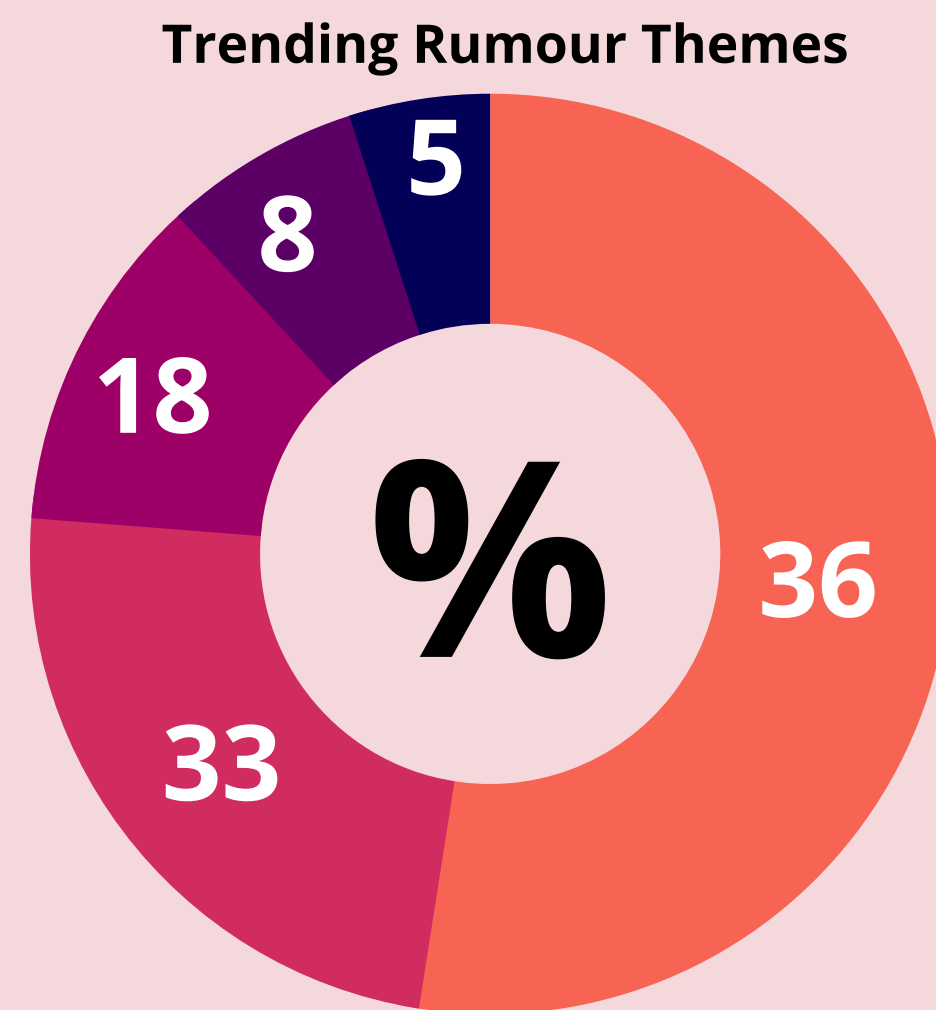
The explanation by Dr. Maria Van Kerkhove, WHO's COVID-19 technical lead and head of its program on emerging disease, that the disease was “here to stay” as the coronavirus was not going away any time soon and will continue to cause waves indicates the need for continued efforts to inform and educate the public about the threat of the virus given that Zimbabwe is yet to achieve its herd immunity target.

Given this background, the Chief Coordinator of the National Response to COVID-19 in the Office of the President and Cabinet Dr Agnes Mahomva has advised citizens to remain vigilant by wearing masks when necessary, as the pandemic was not over, and that Government would continue efforts of ensuring public institutions are safe especially as the country heads into the winter season where there is likely to be an increase in respiratory diseases.

What can we do as humanitarian actors?

- **Humanitarian organisations can** distribute local language (Ndebele, Shona, Kalanga, Tonga, Venda and Sotho) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) factsheets in communities explaining the meaning of WHO's declaration of the end of the COVID-19 pandemic's emergency phase and highlight the continued threat that the COVID-19 virus has and what needs to be done to reduce the threat.
- **Humanitarian actors can distribute** local language (Ndebele, Shona, Kalanga, Tonga, Venda and Sotho) podcasts and videos featuring health experts explaining why people need to continue adhering to COVID-19 prevention protocols such as vaccination, social distancing, using masks and hand sanitisers even though the emergency phase of the pandemic has ended.

Rumor Trends Analysis



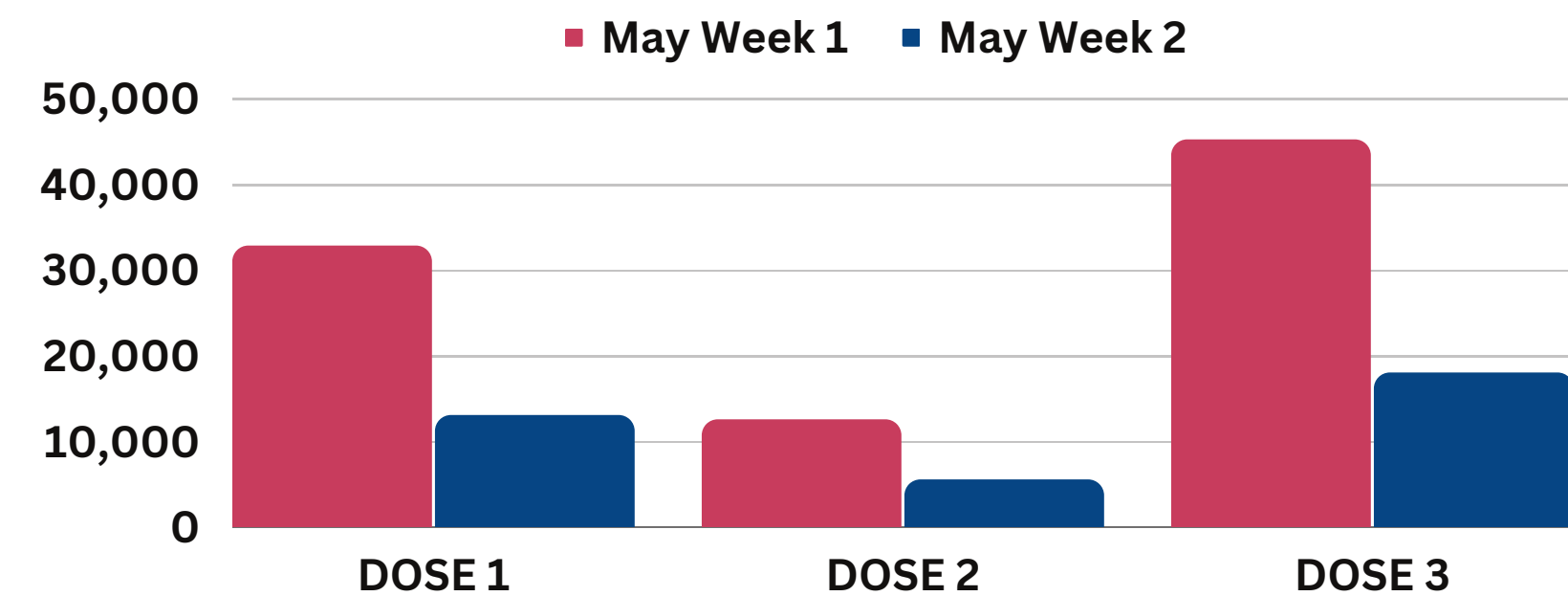
- COVID-19 was never there, it was all a scam.
- COVID-19 vaccination is no longer necessary.
- Poor sanitation is escalating the spread of Cholera.
- COVID-19 is endemic.
- Government is using COVID-19 for corruption.

Source: Infographic by Internews: Data by RiT 2.0 Global Rumours Dashboard

Between May 3 and May 9, 2023, Internews in Zimbabwe collected 88 COVID-19, other health and humanitarian related rumours. Of the total, 26 rumours were collected online (Facebook: 11 and Twitter: 15) and 62 through in-person interactions. Trending rumour themes were, "COVID-19 was never there, it was all a scam" (36%), "COVID-19 vaccination is no longer necessary" (33%), "Poor sanitation is escalating the spread of Cholera" (18%), "COVID-19 is endemic" (8%) and "Government is using COVID-19 for corruption" (5%).

COVID-19 context

Week-on-Week Vaccination Comparison



Source: Visualisation by Internews: Data by Ministry of Health and Child Care (MoHCC)

- First vaccine dose uptake in Zimbabwe decreased by 60% from 32,833 doses administered in week one of May 2023 to 13,113 administered in week two of May 2023.
- There was a 55% decrease in the uptake of second vaccine dose and 60% decrease in the uptake of third vaccine dose. Second vaccine uptake decreased from 12,556 to 5,592 doses, while the third vaccine dose uptake increased from 45,222 to 18,073 doses.
- The drop in vaccination rates may be attributed to vaccine uptake reluctance induced by the World Health Organisation (WHO) announcement on COVID-19 being no longer a global health emergency on May 5, 2023.
- As of May 9, 2023, there were 134 active COVID-19 cases with 13 hospitalised. Of the total, 13 hospitalised cases were vaccinated, and none was unvaccinated. No COVID-19 related deaths were recorded during week two.
- Cumulatively, Zimbabwe has vaccinated 7,221,305 people with the first vaccine dose and 5,392,712 with the second vaccine dose, translating to 53.9% of the 10 million herd immunity target initially set for end December 2022. A total of 2,018,681 people have received the third vaccine dose.

Cholera update

As of May 9, 2023, 800 suspected Cholera cases, 242 confirmed cases, 725 recoveries, 5 confirmed deaths and 18 suspected deaths have been recorded in Zimbabwe since the outbreak began on February 12, 2023. Nine out of 10 provinces in the country have recorded cases of the diseases which is affecting 17 Cholera hotspots districts which are Buhera, Chegutu, Chikomba, Chimanimani, Chipinge, Chitungwiza, Chiredzi, Harare, Gokwe North, Marondera, Mazowe, Shamva, Mutare, Murehwa, Mwenezi, Seke and Wedza.

The current outbreak follows the 2018 outbreak where 20 people died and over 2,000 were infected in Harare, and the August 2008 to July 2009 outbreak that claimed over 5,000 lives. Poor water and sanitation services have been identified as the main causes of recurrent outbreaks.

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