



Maka Toky - Rooted in Trust 2.0

Humanitarian bulletin - March-April 2023

Rooted in Trust 2.0 (RiT 2.0) is a global pandemic -information- response program funded by the USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID-BHA) and implemented by Internews in 13 countries, to counter the unprecedented scale and speed of the spread of rumors and misinformation on COVID-19, COVID-19 vaccines, other Health and Humanitarian topics. The project aims to strengthen the information ecosystem; by mitigating the risks of rumors and misinformation to vulnerable populations affected by humanitarian crises during the COVID-19 pandemic by first understanding the community information needs and supplying them with good and life-saving information.

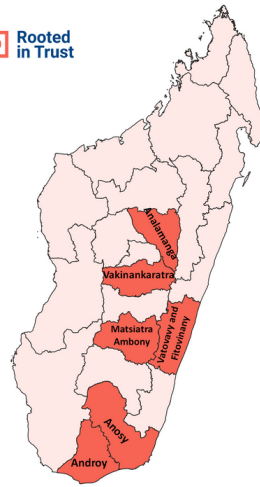


Internews is implementing the project in six regions in Madagascar namely Androy, Analamanga, Vakinankaratra, Haute Matsiatra, Vatovavy and Anosy. The project works with three local partners and one service provider for rumor collection and community listening (offline through listening groups, focus groups, and online); namely NGO Communication Idea Development, ILONTSERA, the Coalition des Radios and VIAMO respectively.

In Madagascar, until January 2023, the RiT 2.0 project focused on collecting rumors around COVID-19, COVID-19 vaccines, and other health-related concerns thus putting communities and individuals at the centre of project design and implementation. From February 2023, our data collection have been extended to the themes of climate change and social cohesion.

ABOUT THIS BULLETIN

This bulletin is targeted for humanitarian actors involved in the fight against COVID-19 and other public health issues by addressing rumors collected within the community and in relation to the service interventions they receive in the sector. These analyses will be accompanied by recommendations to humanitarian, health actors and other agencies working to serve the communities in the project locations mentioned. This bulletin covers the period from March 1 to April 30, 2023. During this period, 412 rumors were collected, including 273 online and 139 offline through listening groups.



OUR PARTNERS



Data Analysis

In March 2023, Madagascar was still in the middle of a cyclonic period due to Cyclone Freddy. Thus, the data collected during this period focused on the rumors of climate change and disaster risk reduction (DRR), particularly on the food security situation and the post-cyclone response in the regions of Vatovavy, Fitovinany, Androy and Anosy. Compared to the two previous cyclone periods, the Vatovavy and Fitovinany regions were the most exposed and vulnerable to the passage of cyclones with the passage of cyclone Batsirai and Emnati in February 2022 and then the passage of cyclone Freddy in January 2023. These two cyclones made the two regions more vulnerable to malnutrition and food insecurity. And in the southern part, the Androy and Anosy regions have a semi-arid climate translating to low agricultural production, which also leads to malnutrition and food insecurity in these areas.

According to our data, rumors associate climate change or disaster risk management as one of the sources of the malnutrition/food insecurity situation in regions that are vulnerable to the context. Communities share their opinions on the possible origin or cause of climate change, especially the hazards in their region, e.g. the origin of the cyclone, the cause of the Tiomena. The effect and response are related to the situation before, during and after the passage of a hazard in the affected areas where people give their opinions on the situation.

In March - April, 13.83% of rumors (57 rumors) were classified under Climate Change and DRR themes. Rumors about food security/Malnutrition (28.07%) mostly in the Vatovavy region and the different risks that could affect the regions (21.05%) are the most discussed topic in our data. During this period, the community talked about the causes of climate change, the government's use of natural disaster funds, and about the community's lack of trust in the official authorities, in the humanitarian or other international organizations.

Two main themes are more present in our database:

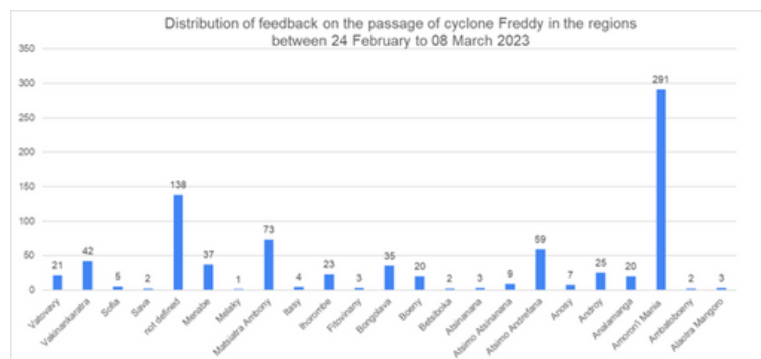
- **The coordination of the response:** rumors talk about the mismanagement of the response by humanitarians and local coordination units;
- **The nature of climate change, where people give their opinions on the origin and cause of the cyclone and climate change.** The latter is presented as an artificial creation designed to impoverish developing countries.

In contrast, the rumors collected around Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction gather data from like-minded people to inform people's perception of the situation.

During the passage of the cyclone Freddy in March, Rooted in Trust 2.0 team and partners collected information on the situation of the affected populations. This was by using VIAMO's greenline 3-2-1. The project registered up to 825 tickets on the situation in the regions that were affected by Cyclone Freddy. These information will be used and analyzed to identify the need for information during a cyclone passage. The information collected indicates that during the first 72 hours of the passage of the cyclone, all radio stations reported problems of operation and transmission during and after the cyclone passed through in their locality such as:

- Problems with transmitters,
- Power outages,
- Relay antennas.

The only way to share information is by word of mouth, which increases the risk of relaying false information. Only people with sufficient access to the internet and social networks have access to information that is not even reliable. All the information gathered shows that there are many gaps in the system of information exchange in emergency situations.





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THEME: The Tiomena phenomenon in the Androy region



**Ny roplana mandalo no mampisy
ny Tiomena**

Translation :
"The passage of planes causes the Tiomena."

Rumor 1

SOURCE: MAN 46 – 60
YEARS, FOCUS GROUP
DISCUSSION, ANDROY
REGION.



Context

The aircraft discussed in this rumor are those used by humanitarians for missions in the Androy region.

What is Tiomena ?

Tiomena is a local name used in Madagascar which means literally red wind (because of the very fine particles of red earth swept by the wind) or sandstorms. It is an extreme climate event that causes chronic drought and devastates crops. It invades villages in the South of Madagascar and covers all surfaces including fields. As a result, people get no harvest and even the water points are clogged. This is one of the causes of food insecurity and infectious diseases in the south of Madagascar.

Why this is important:

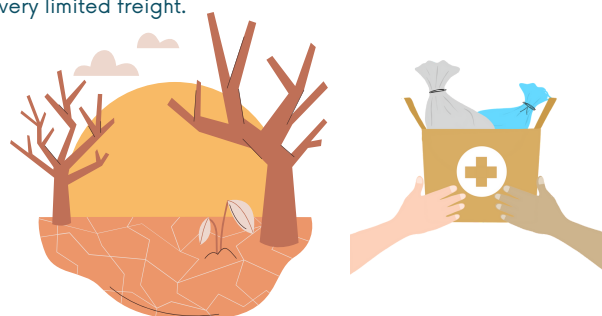
The rumor highlights misinformation about the Tiomena phenomenon and shows how little people know about the climatic phenomena in their region. It also shows that they have very little access to information.

This rumor shows the community's lack of understanding and lack of trust in the actions of humanitarians. The fact that humanitarian planes are flying around during the Tiomena period reinforces the population's belief that these planes are the cause of this phenomenon.

The spread of such a rumor could lead to the anger of the community towards the humanitarian actors. This could further complicate their interventions.

Fact checking

- Tiomena is a natural phenomenon that occurs between July and October. A period during which the humanitarian actions are also reinforced because of the dry season which accentuates the drought in the south of Madagascar. This phenomenon has, reportedly, been going on for decades. This phenomenon is in no way related to the passage of aircraft in the region.
- According to the Governor of Androy, the planes are there to speed up the response to humanitarian emergencies. In these regions/In this region, the regular United Nations Humanitarian Air Services (UNHAS) flights come twice a week and seldom from the UN and for a very limited freight.



Recommendations

Humanitarians should use local radio stations to inform the population about the existence of these flights and their purpose and why it is important for humanitarian actions.

Communication officers from humanitarian organizations can work with local journalists to find appropriate formats for reporting on the results of these interventions. This intervention could help the local population to know why and how often these planes must fly over their area. In order to reassure them

It is also recommended to humanitarian to develop sharing sessions with the community on the origin of Tiomena. In this sense, it is necessary to involve resource people who have the trust of the community.



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THEME: Management Beliefs on the origin of cyclones



"Fitadiavana vola tompoko ny cyclone eto madagasikara! Aveo fanaovana propagande Etsy s eroa donc aleo ho betsaka n'y traboina angamba!"

Translation :

"In Madagascar, cyclones are a way to ask for funds! To make propaganda everywhere, so maybe they are just waiting for the disaster victims to be numerous."

Rumor 2

SOURCE: FACEBOOK, A COMMENT POSTED BY A WOMAN AGED: BETWEEN:46 - 60 YEARS OLD ON A POST ABOUT CYCLONES IN MADAGASCAR.

Why this is important

Based on our data, 39% of the information collected in March on climate change and disaster risk reduction indicates that people believe that the government is taking advantage of the situation to get aid or funding to finance their own elections or just to show that they are at the bedside of the victims by taking advantage of the visibility that this offers.

If this rumor persists Cyclone communications are at risk of being ignored by the population. In this case, the population could be more vulnerable than they already are to the impacts of cyclones, because they are less prepared.



Fact checking

- According to the meteorology service in Antananarivo, the cyclone season in Madagascar officially runs from mid-December to mid-April, but in reality, the real cyclone risk is mainly in January, February and March. Madagascar experiences between one and three cyclones per year during this period.
- In the last three years, the intensity of cyclones tends to be important and more vigilance from the population is required.
- For the Regional Directorate of Health and the municipality of Fort Dauphin; the management of cyclone responses is done by preparing accommodation sites in public primary schools with emergency kits and free medicines for the victims – said Dr. Ruffine: Medical Inspector of the Anosy region.
- Officials at the National Office of Risk and Disaster management (BNGRC) say that every donation received is tracked to ensure that it reaches its destination. The office has representations in the provinces to ensure aid coordination and actions at a more local level.
- BNGRC has set up a system of predisposition of aid and support in collaboration with the entities concerned by the responses to cyclone damage, through a tool called risk atlas. This tool helps to identify which regions are vulnerable to climate hazards, and how many people could be affected.
- According to General Elack Andrianjaka, director general of the BNGRC, the call for international aid is launched when the number of disasters affected population reaches 25,000 people. Madagascar did not call for international aid during the last cyclone.
- Disaster information is centralized at the level of the BNGRC which organizes the response. CRIC platform gathers all the humanitarians and ministerial departments in this objective. It is led by BNGRC.

Recommendations

Humanitarians should work with the regional representatives of the national risk and disaster management office to strengthen the communication and the transparency to community about the management of donations and aid made in the context of post-cyclone emergency relief.

In addition to the information distributed centrally by the coordination group, humanitarians should also use their regional offices and community partners to provide information at the local level. That will allow to save time and create more trust and proximity.

Humanitarians could strengthen collaboration with journalists to explain the procedures in force in terms of managing donations during cyclones.

Humanitarians could consider setting up permanent communication support by developing radio programs in the areas identified at risk during cyclones. Thus, this action could inculcate response reflexes in the population.

If you wish to contact RiT2.0 Madagascar

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