Rumors in this bulletin were collected by Internews in Zimbabwe, for the period July 01, 2022, to July 31, 2022.

Overall, Internews identified a total of 266 rumors from various posts and comments on Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and through in person social listening groups with communities. Rumor selection criteria is based on a risk assessment matrix that accounts for the frequency of discussion or social media engagements and its potential impact in the community.
Internews in Zimbabwe collected 266 rumors during the period ending July 31 from July 01, 2022, with 25% rumors from Facebook, 47% from Twitter and 28% from community platforms using in person listening groups. Trending rumors included that, "Masks should be abolished as COVID-19 is over (40%), "Government is benefiting from COVID-19 (27%)", "Masks are ineffective against COVID-19 (15%)", "Police are implementing COVID-19 regulations in a corrupt manner (9%)", and "Number of vaccine doses is too many (8%)". Internews Zimbabwe and partners also collected 4 rumors linking Monkeypox to COVID-19 during the reporting period.

Zimbabwe recorded an increase of 50% in 1st vaccine doses administered in period ending July 31, 2022. 2nd vaccine dose uptake increased by 5% to 100,459 from 95,652 recorded last month and the 3rd vaccine dose increased by 10% from 61,094 recorded in June to 67,085 in July.

COVID-19 regulations have been relaxed and life seems back to normal for many. Active cases dropped from 1,332 in June to 463 in July. 43 people were admitted to hospital for COVID-19 in July compared to 155 last month. As of July 31, 2022, there were 17 hospitalized cases with 9 out of 11 cases vaccinated while 6 were unvaccinated. COVID-19 related deaths decrease in July to 20 from 51 in June 2022.
The concern is being triggered by the continuous hiking of data tariffs by leading mobile operators such as Econet and Netone. Mobile networks supported by Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ) have indicated that for them to survive in the hyper-inflationary environment, there is need for the continuous increase in tariffs.

The concern reflects the impact of COVID-19 on the education system of the country and the widening digital-divide. When COVID-19 hit, schools were forced to close and private schools as well as tertiary institutions migrated studies to online platforms. Most students could, however, not access these platforms due to lack of enabling resources such as data and smart gadgets to access online resources. There was no support from government to students with data or the gadgets for online studies.
The rumor highlights perceptions from some communities, who believe that alcoholic beverages or products can prevent and cure COVID-19, perceiving that the virus will likely infect the throat. This emanates from people’s hesitancy to get vaccinated for COVID-19 due to misinformation about possible side effects of vaccines. They therefore prefer to use other methods to protect themselves and their families from the pandemic.

The rumor is important as it reflects how communities are using the information they have, whereby hand sanitizers containing alcohol are used to kill the virus, to create myths and misconceptions around COVID-19 prevention using alcoholic beverages.

Recommendations

- **Humanitarian and health organizations** working with women, men and youth can engage them in community dialogues, to understand the myths and misconceptions around COVID-19 prevention measures with special focus on the issues of alcoholic beverages and provide these target groups with correct and accurate information on COVID-19 prevention.

- **Partners working in communities** can engage with women, men, youth and migrants and compile frequently asked questions around areas of COVID-19 prevention and treatment, leading to the creation of a frequently asked questions (FAQ) Factsheets with correct and accurate information to the questions that can be distributed at health institutions, supermarkets, bus terminus, local markets and in schools to increase the flow of good, timely, accurate and lifesaving information.

**WHAT’S BEHIND THE RUMOR?**

The rumor highlights perceptions from some communities, who believe that alcoholic beverages or products can prevent and cure COVID-19, perceiving that the virus will likely infect the throat. This emanates from people’s hesitancy to get vaccinated for COVID-19 due to misinformation about possible side effects of vaccines. They therefore prefer to use other methods to protect themselves and their families from the pandemic.

The rumor is important as it reflects how communities are using the information they have, whereby hand sanitizers containing alcohol are used to kill the virus, to create myths and misconceptions around COVID-19 prevention using alcoholic beverages.

Translation: “We ended up buying whisky and other alcohol products for our wives and children after getting information that those who drink strong stuff like whisky will not be infected with the Corona Virus.” (Shona, Masvingo, Kobo, July 6, 2022).

**FACTS**

The MoHCC advises the public that there is no specific medicine to prevent or treat coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and seeking medical attention is recommended for those presenting serious COVID-19 symptoms. COVID-19 vaccinations are effective for protection and lowering the risk of getting and spreading the virus.

According to World Health Organization (WHO), drinking alcohol does not protect you against COVID-19 and can be dangerous. Alcohol based can be an effective household disinfectant or hand cleaner in a pinch to help eliminate most germs. However, the same does not hold true about drinking alcoholic beverages. It can be lethal if one ingest a disinfectant meant for rubbing on surfaces and utensils.

**ORGANISATIONS WORKING ON SUBSTANCE ABUSE**

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