Social Media Monitoring –
Rumors collected in February 2022
Focus on misinformation shared by ordinary Afghan social media users

Total Rumors Collected: 148

- Facebook: 99%
- Twitter: 1%
- Dari: 57%
- Pashto: 42%
- English: 1%
What are the rumours about?

- COVID-19 General: 64%
- COVID-19 Vaccines: 20%
- General Health: 16%
Sub-themes Distribution

COVID-19 General: Sub-themes

COVID-19 Vaccines: Sub-themes

Health: Sub-themes

Non-COVID-19 Vaccines

Trust

Traditional remedies
Recent weeks’ trends 1: COVID-19 - Authorities

What’s behind it?

- Media and authorities report surge in COVID-19 cases and deaths
- Educational institutes were due to reopen
- Perceived corruption

Everything about COVID-19 is a lie.
Stop brainwashing people.
Recent weeks’ trends 2: COVID-19 - Hakim Alokhozay; Virus is not an issue

What’s behind it?

- Alokhozay’s ‘vaccine’ increased in popularity as an alternative to official vaccines
- Persistent ‘virus is a hoax’ rumors
- Perception virus is not a threat
- Omicron seen as ‘not severe’ – more people have had COVID
Recent weeks’ trends 3: Covid Vaccines are dangerous; J&J Vaccines

Do not vaccinate, it is dangerous, Corona is just a policy. Vaccine is 100% harmful.

[COVID-19] Vaccine doesn’t have any benefits. Whoever got the [COVID-19] vaccine has died, it’s only reducing the pain nothing else.

American vaccine? That means one million more people will die.

What’s behind it?

• Lack of trust in authorities, the international community and business interests
• Belief that vaccines are for population control or cause death
• J&J vaccine rollout in Afghanistan
• Lack of trust in the US
Recent weeks’ trends 4: Polio – Vaccinators; WHO

- Active polio campaign
- Vaccinators killed in Kunduz in February
- Perception of corruption of WHO

What’s behind it?

Thanks God, Thanks God. I swear that I get much happier by killing of the vaccinators than the killing of Americans.

I'm worried that they [Vaccinators] will drop more than two [Polio vaccine] drops, and that will be harmful.

Unless WHO hire professionals, polio virus cannot be eliminated. It can easily be eliminated if the WHO wants to. They don't want to eliminate it. They are corrupt.
Recent weeks’ trends 5: Polio - haram/halal; only Islamic countries

What’s behind it?

• Vaccine is haram - religious leaders from Afghanistan and Pakistan
• Islamic countries where polio is endemic still - vaccination campaigns in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Nigeria
• Some vaccines have had porcine elements in them
Why it matters

- Infectious diseases pose a serious risk to Afghans due also to malnutrition and immunity in the current crisis
- Outbreaks of preventable illnesses currently: measles, polio, AWD/cholera
- Vaccine hesitancy and overall mistrust deter families to vaccinate their children

How should humanitarians respond?

- Understand what is behind the rumors: beliefs, traditions, current issues
- Address perceptions
- Communicate facts with reputable sources and working with community and religious leaders
  - debunk rumors and share information about risks
  - Q&A from RCCE
- Reaching vulnerable groups - using different methods to reach different groups
Discussion: how should humanitarians respond?

- Where is the lack of trust in vaccinators coming from?
- Type of polio vaccine being administered and vaccine-induced polio
- Haram or halal: inconsistent messaging from authorities and religious leaders
- Access to vaccines - hard to reach areas and sites where vaccines are administered, door to door vs. mosques, etc
- With COVID-19, vaccines are again a big topic in general society.

Thank you
Any questions or you wish to share community engagement feedback and rumor data or to collaborate in other ways please contact Mary Menis – mmenis@internews.org