Focus on misinformation shared by ordinary Afghan social media users

Social Media Monitoring 1 - 29 March 2022

Total Rumors Collected: 98
- Facebook
- English, 1%
- Dari, 47%
- Pashto, 52%
What are the rumors about?

- COVID-19 General: 56%
- COVID-19 Vaccines: 22%
- General Health: 22%
Sub-themes Distribution – COVID-19

- Hoax: 60%
- Government: 20%
- Other: 10%
- Endemic: 5%
- Treatment/Cure: 5%
- Travel: 5%
- Symptoms: 0%
Sub-themes Distribution - COVID-19 Vaccines

- Safety/Side Effects: 50%
- Political Agenda: 45%
- Vaccine Agenda: 5%
- Other: 5%
- Expiration: 5%
- Distribution: 5%
Sub-themes Distribution - Health

- Non-COVID-19 Vaccines: 100%
- Other: 0%
- International Organisations: 0%
Recent weeks’ trends: COVID-19 - Hoax

There is no COVID-19 or Corona at all. The people of the world die because of fear... As the elders say, fear is the brother of death [Afghan Local Proverb]...

It’s another new game [wave of COVID-19] just started?

What’s behind it?

• Continued skepticism about the pandemic and the virus due to lack of trust in authorities, the international community, the ‘West’ and big pharma

• Cases that were on the rise in January and February likely due to Omicron variant
What’s behind it?

- Increasing coverage of health impacts caused by COVID-19 due to ongoing research
- Vaccine campaign in Panjshir
- Instability in Panjshir and continued resistance to authorities
Recent weeks’ trends: Polio Vaccines

What’s behind it?

• Ongoing mistrust in polio vaccines due to campaigns in Pakistan and Afghanistan and religious beliefs (whether the vaccine is halal)

• Cases of polio appearing
Recent weeks’ trends: Measles Outbreak

It [Beginning of Measles Vaccination] is a good step, but recently, despite the applying of Measles vaccine to children under the age of five, measles has spread and is threatening children.

What’s behind it?

- Ongoing Measles Vaccination Campaign taking place in Afghanistan
- Lack of understanding in how vaccines work
- Other – children being vaccinated after having contract measles?
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
We’d love to talk to you and get your inputs!

Social Media Research - request for key informants

• Research considering social media use by ordinary Afghans, media, the authorities and the humanitarian community
• To provide insights and recommendations for the humanitarian community to utilize SM for engaging with community
• Organizations who engage with Afghan communities via social media platforms and messaging apps

Social Listening - request for key informants

• Organizations carrying out offline and online social listening with communities
• Rapid global review to inform internal understanding of social media listening practices
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

Thank you