**LEBANON SITUATION REPORT**

A MONTHLY SITUATION REPORT Aimed at Tackling COVID-19 Rumors to Debunk the “Infodemic”

**ABOUT ROOTED IN TRUST**

Rooted in Trust is collecting, analyzing, and responding to rumors in 13 countries with generous support from USAID’s Bureau of Humanitarian Affairs (BHA). We focus on equipping journalists and humanitarian communicators with the tools they need in the languages they prefer, to combat rumors and misinformation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**HOW WE DO IT**

We identify and analyze rumors to help humanitarian actors and health workers better inform their Risk Communication & Community Engagement (RCCE) strategies.

**SITUATION BY THE NUMBERS (WHO)**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Covid-19 cases reported</td>
<td>2,890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(During March 2023)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of deaths</td>
<td>10,867</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Until March 2023)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Latest reported cases per day</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>(In March 2023)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total vaccinated</td>
<td>5,814,699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(As of 21 December 2022)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Vaccinated with at least one dose</td>
<td>2,740,227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(As of 21 December 2022)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons fully vaccinated</td>
<td>2,414,223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(As of 21 December 2022)</td>
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**INTRODUCTION**

In March 2023, there were a total of 2,890 new COVID-19 cases as reported by the WHO. While influenza viruses spread year-round, spring has brought warmer weather and the peak months for influenza activity between December and February are now over. Lebanon’s positivity rate was at 4% at the end of February, which is expected to steadily decrease going forward. Lebanon’s persisting socio-economic crisis continues to affect many individuals throughout the country. Growing food security concerns and rumors have circulated more widely in March following Ramadan and expectations around Iftar.
In March, a total of 202 rumors were collected of which 100 were online rumors and 102 were offline rumors. This month Social Media Monitors predominantly captured online rumors on Twitter (46%) and WhatsApp (21%). The theme of “Other Health Topic” (57%) continues to be top-trending followed by “Food Security” (26%), “COVID-19 General” (10%), “COVID-19 Vaccine” (10%), and lastly “Other Non-Health Non-COVID-19” (1%). As seen in the last two months, the majority of online rumors came from Ordinary People (53%) followed by Influencers (36%).

The sub-themes with the highest number of rumors collected were “Chronic diseases” (14 rumors) and “Other” (14 rumors), both of which are found under the theme of “Other Health Topic”. The former set of rumors predominantly make reference to cancer, some noting that early detection is a hoax, that manicure dryers cause cancer, and that Lebanon is using a drug imported from India that is contaminated with bacteria. The latter set of rumors are diverse, ranging from adding salt to water when cooking pasta as being very dangerous to a new epidemic threatening the world, which is supposedly equivalent to a nuclear weapon.

Following trends observed in February, the most prevalent sub-themes for the theme of “Food Security” were “Corruption” (10 rumors) and “Individual Access / Affordability” (9 rumors). These include rumors about individuals tampering with US Dollar prices to make a profit at the expense of others, as well as individuals being poisoned from eating spoiled food with several rumors making specific reference to cheese.

The 102 offline rumors were collected through Focus Group Discussions in Dahr Al Ain, El Borj Akkar, El Mina, and Tabbaneh throughout March. More than a third of offline rumors were from the theme “Other Health Topic” (43%), followed by “COVID-19 Vaccine” (30%) and “COVID-19 General” (27%). As seen in February, the top sub-theme for the “Other Health Topic” theme was “Other” (16 rumors). Most of these rumors stated that contaminated food and water give people cancer, as well as ‘alternative medication’ having negative effects on health and leading to death.

While the online theme of “Food Security” has not been incorporated into the offline rumor methodology, there were three rumors collected under the sub-theme of “Malnutrition”. The rumors expressed concerns about the lack of affordable foods leading to the prevalence of diseases and having little access to affordable foods for Ramadan.
### THEMES AND SUBTHEMES

#### Theme: Other Health Topic

**Subtheme:**
- Access to healthcare
- Availability of healthcare
- Child health
- Chronic diseases
- Communicable disease
- Hygiene
- Malnutrition
- Mental health
- Sexual and reproductive health
- Healthcare workers
- Vaccination programs

#### Theme: Food Security

**Subtheme:**
- Access Rights
- Corruption
- Death
- Individual Access/Affordability
- Malnutrition
- Other
- Refugee Community-Syrian
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