LEBANON SITUATION REPORT
A monthly situation report aimed at tackling COVID-19 rumors to debunk the "infodemic"

June 2022 | #4

About RiT

Rooted in Trust is collecting, analyzing and responding to rumors in 10 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)

- Covid-19 cases reported during June 2022: **8,605**
- Total number of deaths: **10,461**
- Latest reported cases per day: **581**
- Number of Quarantined: **6,370**
- Vaccine doses during May: **32,096**
- First dose: **9,615**
- Second dose: **6,298**
- Third dose: **11,981**

Introduction

According to WHO, Lebanon is now at Level 2 of community transmission. Meanwhile, the general public’s concerns continue to be drawn away from the COVID-19 situation due to the ongoing economic crisis. The first half of the month saw tensions surrounding the disputed maritime border zone with Israel. This was then followed by a Hepatitis A outbreak in Tripoli and a high number of food poisoning cases reported in the Bekaa region. High vigilance continues to be recommended with a focus on social distancing measures and increased vaccine coverage, particularly among already vulnerable population groups as well as children. Fourth doses are now available, and the MoPH is also encouraging that children receive the COVID-19 vaccine.
Data Overview

With a total of 73 online rumors collected for the month of June 2022, misinformation trends continue to revolve around the top sub-theme of "Long-COVID", including adverse long-term side effects such as developing diabetes, arthritis, or immunodeficiency disorders.

Over one-third of the online rumors stem from so-called “Healthcare Professionals”, whereby more than half of these rumors express fear and confusion. Healthcare Professionals started rumors such as COVID-19 being the main cause for the rise in cases of Shingles (Herpes Zoster) and that doctors themselves are refusing the COVID-19 vaccines due to their ineffectiveness.

Overall, online vaccine-related rumors continue in Lebanon, most focusing on post-vaccination behavior. These include alarming complications such as causing breast cancer and death.

Rumors surrounding Monkeypox also continue to be observed online, with many individuals confusing its symptoms and treatments with those of COVID-19. This was further exacerbated with the increase in Hepatitis A rumors following the reported outbreak in Tripoli in mid-June.

A total of 28 offline rumors were collected in El Marj, Saadnayel, and El Jezire in June. Unlike the online rumors, high risk rumors were identified in these face-to-face discussions. Most notably, conspiracy theories continue, whereby COVID-19 is perceived to be a virus created to rid one-third of the world’s population, specifically those who are less educated. Many rumors also focused on vaccine-related impacts, such as death or infertility in women.

KEY THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

Total Number of Rumors Online for June 2022: 73
The month of June saw a staggering 52% decrease in the total number of online and offline rumors collected. This might be linked to political corruption and tensions with bordering countries, as well as other health-related topics becoming more prevalent and dominating news headlines.

People continue to be particularly concerned with long-term COVID-19 vaccine effects and long-COVID symptoms. More recently with the outbreak in the North, some people believe that Hepatitis A may be a long-COVID symptom or that Monkeypox can be transmitted through sexual activities. This has likely been exacerbated by the economic crisis as people cannot afford to implement good Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) practices, coupled by the lack of available medicines on the local market, including Hepatitis A vaccines.

With recent online rumors stating that doctors themselves are not taking the COVID-19 vaccine and offline rumors continually mentioning that the vaccine causes infertility, it is likely that there will be a growing lack of trust in public health institutions and their staff going forward.

With the need to travel for livelihood purposes, upcoming summer vacations and potential overseas travel, it is of vital importance that people continue to follow COVID-19 guidelines. There is a need for further awareness on other emerging health-related topics, especially Monkeypox and Hepatitis A as people are starting to look to the Government for accurate guidance.

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**For more information on the project, visit**
https://internews.org/resource/rooted-trust-rumor-bulletins-lebanon/