INTRODUCTION TO ROOTED IN TRUST

Rooted in Trust (RiT) is a project run by Internews to support humanitarian and public health agencies strengthen information ecosystems. The project ensures that health agencies better respond to communities’ needs and manage the spread of rumors and misinformation about COVID-19. Additionally, the project tracks misinformation on diseases like malaria, cholera, and dengue fever in the affected areas of north and south Yemen with a focus on IDPs and marginalized people.

In this bulletin, Internews profiles commonly occurring rumors across Yemeni social media and through offline and face-to-face collection in the month of May 2023.

During this period 308 Rumors were collected as follows: face-to-face (28), Online (280). The rumor collection was done online on Facebook and Twitter accounts and offline via face-to-face and private in-person group activities, as well as other community engagement activities. Rumors were subsequently selected for this bulletin based on the recurring themes of “Vaccination Program/ Hoax/ Other”

COVID-19 SITUATION IN YEMEN

Yemen’s health system is on the brink of collapse due to the conflict and economic collapse. 21.6 million people need humanitarian aid, while 46% of health facilities are partially functioning or out of service. 12.9 million Yemenis, including 540,000 children under five, require urgent healthcare. Insufficient international funding hampers efforts to address the crisis. Disease outbreaks like measles, diphtheria, dengue fever, cholera, and polio worsen the situation, with thousands of cases reported in the first quarter of the year.

From January 1 to May 20, 2023, IOM Yemen DTM recorded 3,222 households (19,332 individuals) that experienced displacement. Between May 14 and May 20, 2023, they tracked 30 households (180 individuals) newly displaced. The primary destinations for these displacements were Ta’iz (19 households), Ma’rib (7 households), and Al Hodeidah (4 households). Most displacements within Ta’iz and Al Hodeidah were internal. There were also 6 households previously identified as displaced.

As of March 2023, Yemen has reported no new cases or deaths related to COVID-19, indicating a slowdown in the spread of the virus.
Additionally, Qat can contribute to respiratory difficulties and lung problems. Chewing Qat stimulates the brain and increases the production of dopamine, leading to heightened brain activity and a faster functioning nervous system. According to Dr. Al-Ashwal, individuals with mental illnesses like schizophrenia and mania may experience negative effects from consuming Qat. It can intensify feelings of suspicion and result in unusual thoughts. Moreover, Qat consumption can interfere with the effectiveness of their medication. However, Dr. Al-Ashwal observed that individuals who cease Qat consumption and adhere to their prescribed treatment recover more quickly. Therefore, it is advisable to avoid consuming Qat if one has these mental illnesses, as it can diminish the efficacy of their treatment.

Qat, a water-intensive plant, consumes approximately one-third of the groundwater resources. This poses a significant issue since the groundwater supply is not infinite and is essential for various purposes, including drinking water and cultivating other food crops. While cultivating Qat can be financially beneficial for farmers, it occupies a considerable amount of land that could otherwise be utilized for growing nutritious food.

"Qat has economic disadvantages, the rest are all benefits if it is used at times not exceeding six hours. The rest of the information is wrong."
In Yemen, Qat consumption heavily impacts family budgets, with many spending significant portion of their income on purchasing it. This expenditure surpasses even one-third of their budget, exacerbating the problem for the entire country. When individuals engage in daily Qat chewing, it consumes a substantial amount of their time, diverting their focus from productive work. Despite the enjoyment and social aspect associated with chewing Qat, it has adverse effects on the country’s economy. Additionally, the extensive cultivation of Qat occupies a significant amount of land that could be utilized for cultivating other essential crops. Approximately half to two-thirds of arable land is dedicated to Qat production instead of food crops.

Fact Checking

- Encourage healthy habits: Emphasize the importance of adopting good habits such as consuming nutritious food and getting sufficient sleep. These practices contribute to overall well-being and support a healthier lifestyle. It is also crucial to raise awareness about the negative effects of stimulants like Qat and promote its avoidance for better health outcomes.
- Establish support networks: Foster a sense of community and support by creating networks where individuals can seek guidance, share experiences, and receive encouragement in overcoming Qat addiction. This can include support groups, counseling services, and community-led initiatives aimed at addressing Qat consumption.
- Education and awareness programs: Implement educational campaigns to raise awareness about the consequences of Qat consumption, emphasizing its impact on health, productivity, and the economy. These programs should target both individuals and families, providing information on available resources and assistance for those seeking help to overcome Qat addiction.
- Collaboration with local authorities: Collaborate with local authorities and community leaders to develop policies and regulations that discourage Qat cultivation and promote the use of agricultural land for growing essential food crops. This collaborative effort can help redirect resources towards sustainable and beneficial farming practices that contribute to food security and economic development in the community.

Recommendations

For the Community

- Promote alternative activities: Encourage community members to engage in sports, attend self-development classes, language courses, and participate in local activities such as social initiatives and community associations. These activities provide productive outlets for their time and help divert attention away from Qat consumption.
Autism is characterized by challenges in social interaction, communication, and the presence of repetitive behaviors. Delayed speech is often associated with autism as well. As symptoms can vary among children, it is crucial to consult a specialist doctor for an accurate diagnosis of the condition. It is important to note that vaccines do not cause autism; in fact, they can help prevent life-threatening diseases. Vaccines unequivocally do not impact fertility, and it is important to emphasize that there is absolutely no evidence linking vaccines to any risk for future pregnancies. Regarding the concern of experiencing dullness or lethargy after vaccination, it is essential to clarify that while there have been isolated instances of neurological conditions reported following COVID-19 vaccination, these occurrences are rare. The report in the link includes such cases to raise awareness about potential autoimmune reactions that may occur post-vaccination, specifically autoimmune encephalitis with short-term memory loss. The underlying causes of this condition are currently under investigation, and it is important to note that autoimmune encephalitis often goes unnoticed but can have a positive prognosis with timely treatment. It is crucial to emphasize that the benefits of COVID-19 vaccination far outweigh the associated risks, and widespread vaccination efforts continue to be highly recommended.
(There are only fevers that come to people who are allergic to mosquitoes and allergic to malaria, and its symptoms are fever and infections. As for corona, it is only complications of fevers, and it is a lie. We no longer drink antibiotics because it is a trick. They want to weaken our immunity, and it is not useful at all. Therefore, we only eat lemons, oranges, Turmeric, and black caraway seeds to strengthen our immunity).

FACT CHECKING

✅ When individuals are bitten by mosquitoes, some may experience allergic reactions leading to itchiness. However, it’s important to note that not all individuals who are allergic to mosquitoes will develop a fever. Additionally, it is crucial to understand that being allergic to malaria is not a recognized medical concern. Malaria is caused by a parasite transmitted through mosquito bites, and while individuals can have adverse reactions to malaria infection, it is not considered an allergy in the conventional medical sense.

✅ Antibiotics are a type of medication that specifically target bacterial infections and help us recover from illnesses caused by bacteria. However, it’s important to note that antibiotics are not effective against viral infections such as COVID-19. Misusing antibiotics by taking them unnecessarily can contribute to the development of stronger and more resistant bacteria. It’s crucial to use antibiotics only as prescribed by a doctor, as they are the best judge of when antibiotics are truly needed. It’s worth emphasizing that taking antibiotics appropriately does not weaken our immune system.

✅ While incorporating nutritious foods such as lemons, oranges, turmeric, and black caraway seeds into our diet can provide essential nutrients, it’s crucial to understand that solely relying on these foods will not grant our bodies invincibility against COVID-19 or other illnesses. A strategic approach to overall health includes a combination of various factors. This involves maintaining a balanced diet, practicing good hygiene, getting sufficient sleep, exercising regularly, and following official health guidelines. By adopting a holistic and comprehensive strategy, we can enhance our overall well-being and fortify our immune systems against potential health threats.

✅ Coronaviruses belong to a large family of viruses that can cause a range of illnesses, ranging from the common cold to severe respiratory conditions like Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

✅ In the case of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV), common symptoms include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. While pneumonia is frequently observed, not all MERS patients develop this condition. Some patients with MERS have also reported gastrointestinal symptoms, including diarrhea.

✅ It is worth noting that approximately 35% of MERS cases reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) have resulted in death.
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- Seek medical advice: If you have any health concerns or symptoms, it is always advisable to consult with a healthcare professional, such as a doctor. They can provide proper diagnosis and guidance specific to your situation.

- Malaria and mosquito allergies: Malaria is a serious infectious disease transmitted through mosquito bites. While allergies to mosquitoes themselves are rare, if you suspect an allergy or have symptoms related to malaria, it is important to seek medical attention for accurate diagnosis and appropriate treatment.

- COVID-19 precautions: COVID-19 is a real and serious viral illness caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. It can lead to various symptoms, including fever, cough, and respiratory difficulties. It is not just a complication of fevers but a distinct and potentially life-threatening illness. Follow the guidance of health authorities, practice good hygiene, wear masks, and consider getting vaccinated if eligible.

- Proper use of antibiotics: Antibiotics are effective only against bacterial infections, not viral infections like COVID-19. It is crucial to take antibiotics only when prescribed by a healthcare professional for bacterial infections. Overuse or misuse of antibiotics can contribute to antibiotic resistance, which is a significant global health concern.

Balanced diet for overall health: While a healthy diet is important for overall well-being, there is no single food or supplement that guarantees immunity against diseases like COVID-19 or malaria. Eating a balanced diet that includes a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and protein sources is generally beneficial for overall health.

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