

Security Media Trends

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Rumours and Allegations Trending on Social Media

Bulletin 5
May 2020

This week: Remedies and vaccines against COVID-19 and international aid efforts.

As [INGOs start deploying](#) their resources in the DRC to help it limit the growing COVID-19 epidemic, misinformation on social media targeting international health and aid efforts is pervasive following the re-emergence of Ebola and the widely publicised destruction of WFP rice supplies in North Kivu province. The misinformation coincides with the [WHO warning](#) that COVID-19 may continue 'smoldering' for years in African hotspots, and highlights the [challenges](#) that international organisations face within communities in particular in the Eastern DRC.

COVID Organics

The promotion of COVID Organics by Madagascar - a herbal potion mainly based on artemisia touted as an 'Africa solution' to COVID-19 - has been met with much acclaim across Africa, in particular in the DRC where it became known that a [Congolese scientist](#) was reportedly behind the development of the potion. The apparent success of the remedy, seen in its [approval](#) by an ever increasing number of African countries including the DRC, has drawn WHO warnings about the [lack](#) of underpinning clinical evidence.

However, the WHO's reluctance to endorse the remedy was met with [open criticism](#) by Madagascar president Andry Rajoelina, who has claimed that "the problem is that it comes from Africa".

This bulletin shares key trends and insights from media monitoring carried out by Novetta Mission Analytics (NMA) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

It has been developed by Insecurity Insight and [Novetta](#), using Novetta Mission Analytics to [deliver](#) near real-time pattern and behavioural analysis of social, print, and broadcast media (radio and television) content and incident data.

Visit our [website](#) for further security related information for aid agencies in the context of the Covid-19 epidemic.

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For more details on social media monitoring, please get in touch and we can share additional information - info@insecurityinsight.org.

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A picture of a box of COVID Organics, gifted to the DRC from Madagascar. According to social media posts, DRC president Felix Tshisekedi is said to have congratulated his Malagasi counterpart on the discovery of the remedy against COVID-19 in a phone call.



Misinformation accusing Europeans and the international community of seeking to poison Africans with COVID-19 medication and food aid:

- Heightened by the public disagreement between the WHO and Madagascar's president, the sentiment that the WHO and Westerners in general are seeking to undermine African remedies is taking hold. A social media post alleging that the WHO and 'Europeans' have been trying to bribe the president of Madagascar Andry Rajoelina to add poison to the remedy in order to 'kill Africans' has been shared 24,000 times.
- Misinformation targets France, and - to a lesser extent - the United States. Distinctly anti-French messages have been circulating of President Macron's plans to 'exterminate' Africans, including by 'injecting' epidemics or by sterilisation. Moreover, rumours that President Trump has claimed that COVID-19 vaccinations are not to be tested on dogs but on Africans are being shared. Such rumours are often accompanied by warnings to resist Western vaccines or products.
- Rumours targeting the WHO and the international communities are relying on perceived anti-establishment outsiders, in particular Didier Raoult, an Africa-born French biologist whose proposed COVID-19 treatment has thus far been rejected by the WHO as lacking strong scientific evidence. In several stories widely shared on social media, Raoult is shown with warnings to resist French or European vaccines or products, and that the virus was artificially created by the US and China with the complicity of Bill Gates to destroy Africa.
- INGOs' intentions in northeastern DRC are questioned, in particular after tonnes of WFP food aid had to be destroyed after it was certified inappropriate for human consumption by Congolese authorities. Posts are being shared questioning how such a large and renowned organisation commits such mistakes, followed by warnings that foreign organisations claiming to be charitable may have ulterior motives. This shows that mistrust towards products and aid imported from abroad by international organisations is not limited to vaccines and health products.

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