

# The Humanitarian Bulletin

Zimbabwe  
March 26, 2022  
ISSUE 2

## About Rooted in Trust

Rooted in Trust 2.0 is a global pandemic information response program funded by the USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID-BHA) and implemented by Internews to counter the unprecedented scale and speed of the spread of rumors and misinformation on COVID-19 and COVID-19 vaccines.

Rooted in Trust 2.0 in Zimbabwe is working with media, community-based organizations, health and humanitarian actors to build a healthier information ecosystem that is responsive to needs of migrant communities in Southern Zimbabwe, particularly in the provinces of Matabeleland North, Matabeleland South, Midlands, Masvingo and Bulawayo.



## About this bulletin

**This Humanitarian Bulletin** is an analytical product that aims to provide humanitarian and health organizations with an in-depth contextual analysis on rumor trends, the 'why' behind rumors, their potential impacts on communities and humanitarian programming as well as recommendations on how they can better address the rumors.

## Methodology

**The purpose of this bulletin** is to help mitigate the spread of rumors and misinformation about the COVID-19 response in Zimbabwe. It seeks to provide health and humanitarian organizations with rumor trends identified through systematic collection and analysis of social media listening data and face-to-face feedback from communities. Rumor trends and analysis endeavor to help humanitarian actors and health workers better inform their Risk Communication & Community Engagement (RCCE) strategies.

**Rumors in this bulletin** were collected by Internews Zimbabwe's social media monitors from March 1, 2022, to March 26, 2022. Overall, Internews identified 244 rumors from various posts and comments from Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp. The selection of featured rumors is based on a risk assessment matrix that accounts for the rumor's frequency in discussions or social media engagements and its potential impact in the community.

 **244 rumors were collected**

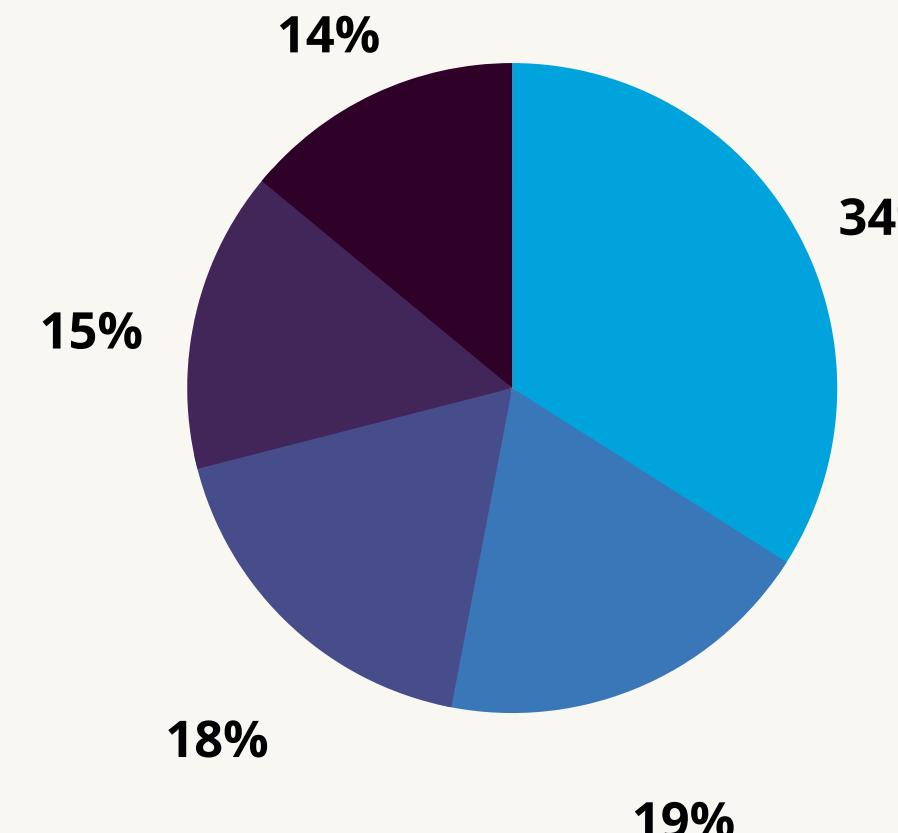
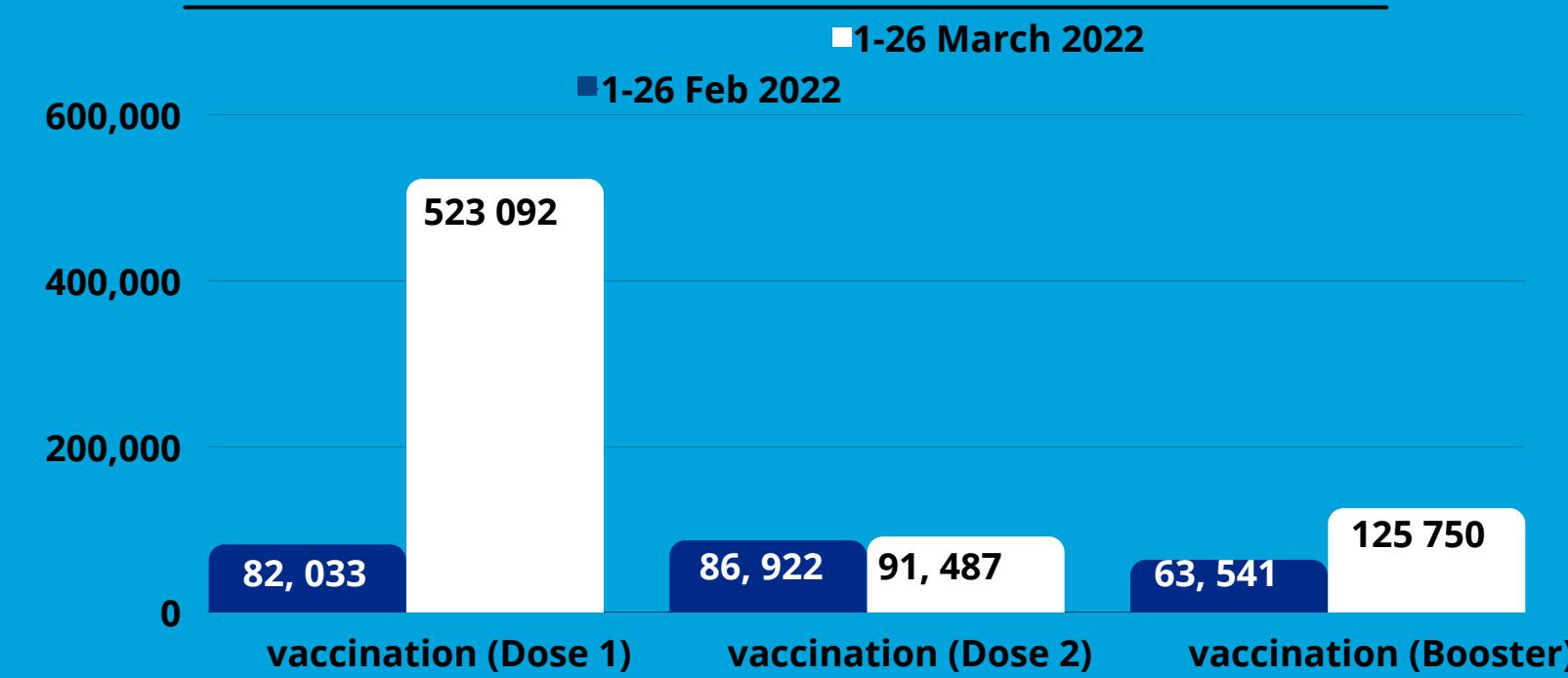
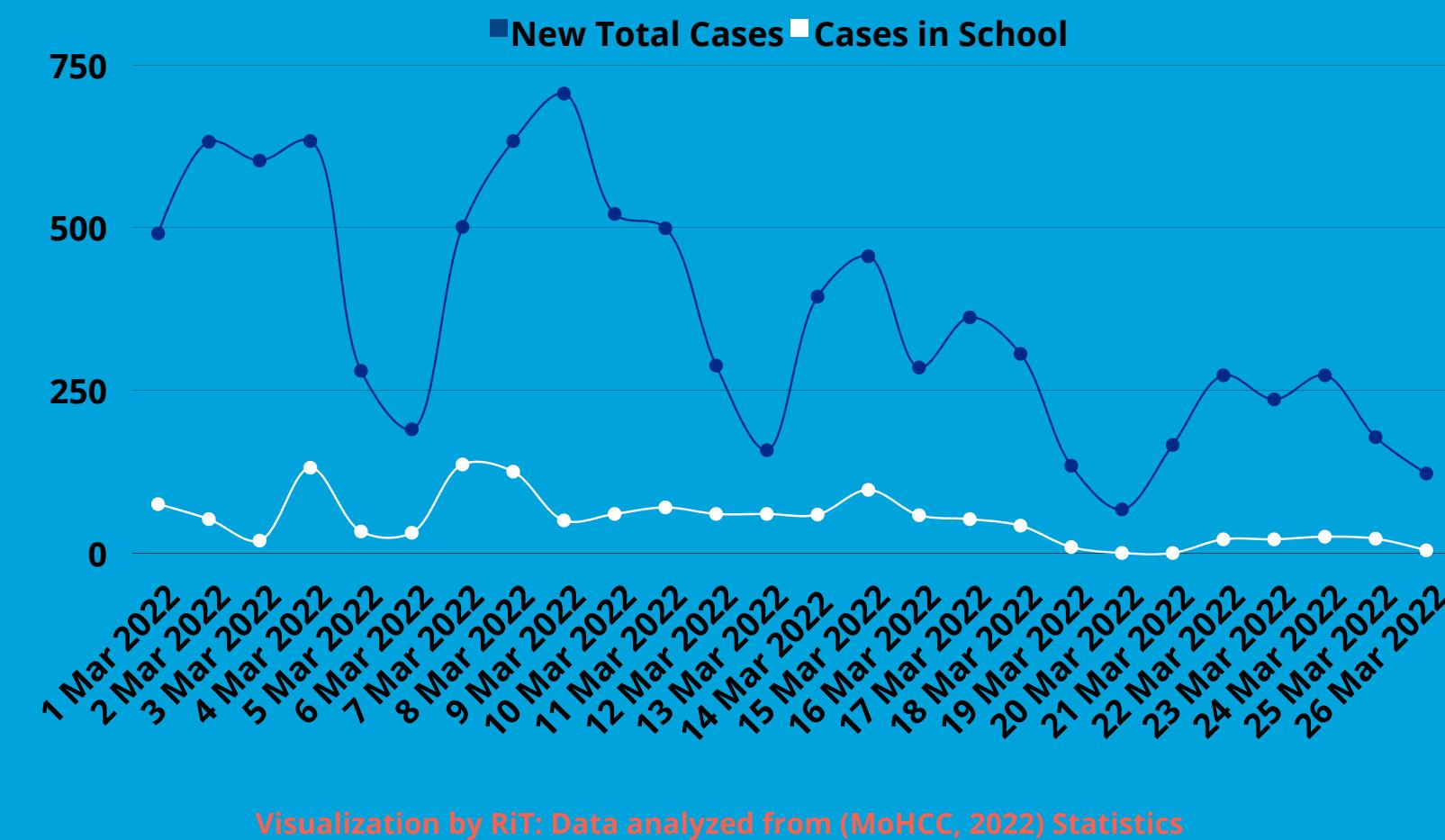
from March 1, 2022,  
to March 26, 2022



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# Rumor data overview: March 1-26, 2022



The government is producing fake COVID-19 statistics.

COVID-19 is now a narrative for corruption.

COVID-19 is being used for political leverage by the ruling party.

COVID-19 is now a thing of the past.

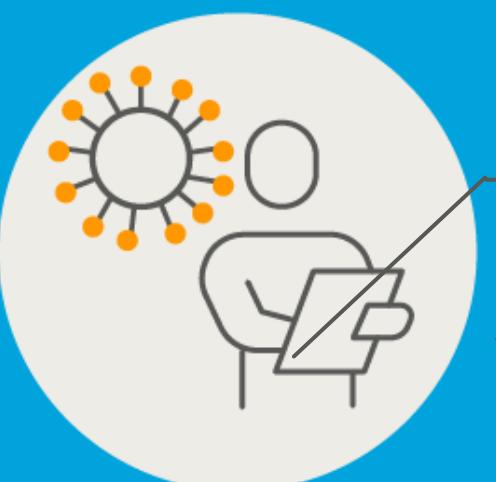
COVID-19 vaccines are unsafe for children and will cause massive deaths.

Country vaccination data shows that 523, 092 people received their first dose, 91, 487 received their 2nd dose and 125, 750 received their 3rd vaccine dose from March 1 to March 26. There was a notably high demand for the 3rd dose during the reporting period with 125, 750 people getting the booster dose compared to 85, 406 in February, an increase of 198% in booster vaccine uptake. This high demand for booster vaccines may be attributed to the announcement by the government that travelers going to neighboring countries through land borders must be fully vaccinated including a booster vaccine.

Data collected from March 1 to March 26 indicates that Zimbabwe recorded 9 387 new COVID-19 cases, 43 deaths, and 10 265 recoveries (recovery rate stands at 96%). Infections in schools accounted for 14% of new recorded infections in the period under review. Average hospitalization rate is 7 per day for the period under review with the highest new hospitalizations (16) recorded on March 5, 2022. Based on month - on-month comparative analysis, cases in Zimbabwe have gone up by 149% compared to the same period in February. The rise in cases has also been observed in schools with 2 319 cases recorded since schools opened, 16% of the 14 164 overall cases recorded since schools opened.

# Fact check

The MoHCC says vaccines protect against preventable diseases that may cause serious harm or death and without vaccines, one has a high risk of serious illness and disability from diseases like measles, meningitis, pneumonia, tetanus, polio and COVID-19



Although studies show that when you are infected with a virus or bacteria, your immune system makes antibodies specifically to fight it, a study conducted last year show that 1/5 infected with COVID-19 did not build antibodies and vaccination is currently the best way of getting protection from COVID-19.

## Recommendations

- Partners should engage with and listen to communities to inform programming:** this can be achieved by engaging different vulnerable groups such as women, youths school children and migrant communities. Separate groups in Focus Group Discussions identify and analyze perceptions, content gaps, information voids and misinformation on the benefits of being vaccinated, even when one has had COVID-19 specific to the different groups.
- Identify trusted sources of information for dissemination in communities:** Partners working with communities should identify and incorporate trusted sources of information such as health care workers, religious leaders, traditional leaders and community-based organizations into their work to deliver information on vaccines to people. These actors are often perceived to be credible and reliable sources.
- Avail information at community level:** organizations working in the RCCE sector may provide information on COVID-19 and vaccine to communities in easy-to-read materials in local languages like Shona, Ndebele, Tonga, Nambya and Venda. Messaging through local radio stations and community radio stations can also be used to ensure that those who cannot access the internet or social media sites and health department websites have accurate information.

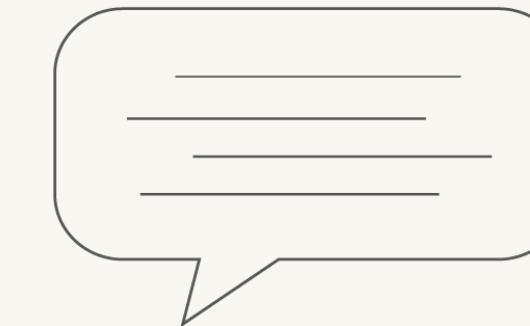
## Rumor Trend

I don't. I've had the illness so I'm immune!!!  
(Facebook 3/9/2022)

01.

## Why does it matter?

This misinformation may lead to communities reasoning that it is not important to get vaccinated if they have been previously infected with COVID-19.



## What's behind the rumor?

The rumor is a reaction to a post by WHO, which promoted the COVID-19 vaccine on its Facebook page, detailing how COVID-19 vaccines have been used to vaccinate billions of people. This rumor illustrates gaps in community understanding about the role of vaccines and vaccination in facilitating immunity to COVID-19. Many may believe that since they have had COVID-19, they are now immune and therefore do not need vaccination. In fact, studies and literature suggest that once people have recovered from COVID-19 they have antibodies against COVID-19. These antibodies, however, vary from person to person and it is unclear how long antibodies built this way may last. Additionally, there have also been cases of people getting COVID-19 several times, even after vaccination. Having doses of the COVID-19 vaccine strengthens the immunity built from the COVID-19 infection and helps protect people more effectively from new and more dangerous COVID-19 variants. In fact, people with hybrid immunity, which comes from immunity from the vaccine and from previous COVID-19 infection, produce a higher level of antibodies, making them less susceptible to COVID-19. Literature shows that even if one has had COVID-19, they still need to be vaccinated for better protection against COVID-19.

However, one can still get COVID-19 for the second time, therefore it is important to boost one's immune system through vaccination. This rumor, will likely fuel vaccine hesitancy amongst communities leading to a rise in infections.

## Fact check

COVID-19 is more infectious than the seasonal flu. The virus has a high hospitalization and death rate especially in people with underlying conditions.



The move by the government to vaccinate children from as young as 12-15 years old combined with the vaccination blitz will likely result in a decrease in the rate of infections in schools.

The launch of the vaccination blitz by government targeting mainly children 12-15 years old in school shows that we are still far from being endemic as this was a response to the rising COVID-19 infections in schools.

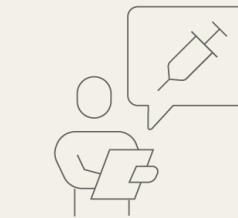
## Recommendations

- Engagement of school health masters in schools:** Humanitarian Actors in COVID-19 RCCE need to engage with school personnel, and parents, for dialogue on how best to encourage children to adhere to COVID-19 prevention protocols considering the fatigue that communities have developed which have seen rising infections in schools.
- Emphasis on COVID-19 prevention protocols:** Materials on COVID-19 prevention protocols can be developed in local languages to cater to every child. Edutainment together with skits and animations and jingles can be used in schools to educate children on COVID-19 as these are captivating for children and at the same time giving the message on prevention.

02.

## Rumor Trend

Please don't start with your covid nonsense. Lives have been messed up already. School children are 2 yrs behind. That thing is just like any disease kwete.zvamoda kutinyepera  
(You are lying to us)  
**(Twitter 3/10/2022)**



## Why does it matter?

The rumor indicates that communities have developed fatigue around adhering to COVID-19 prevention protocols and are ready to return to normalcy such as life before COVID-19. Therefore, this rumor may mislead people to think that COVID-19 is like any other endemic disease.

This may fuel infection rates in some groups, especially school children, as they may disregard adherence to COVID-19 prevention protocols. Since schools opened, 15% of new COVID-19 cases were from schools, an indication that schools are hot spots for the spread of COVID-19.

## What's behind the rumor

The rumor stems from the fact that school cases have continued to increase while many people in Zimbabwe have developed a relaxed attitude about adhering to COVID-19 prevention protocols. Zimbabwe has witnessed a 40% increase with 9387 infections recorded in the month of March as compared to 6714 recorded in February. In response, government expressed concern in a cabinet press statement which was negatively received as demonstrated by sentiments on social media. The rumor reflects the frustration that communities are facing as the school calendar has been affected by continuous lockdown measures. People are ready to go back to living "normally" and define COVID-19 as being endemic.