COVID-19 RUMOUR TRACKER

Misinformation and rumours about COVID-19 can be as dangerous as the virus! It is therefore critical to manage rumours carefully and proactively and counter them before they cause harm or have a negative impact on communities or those trying to assist. This guidance note explains what systems have been put in place in central Rakhine and how partners can contribute to tracking and countering rumours.

A) HOW YOU CAN COLLECT RUMOURS

Rumours can be captured in many different ways by field- and office-based staff. Use a combination of channels to collect misinformation, rumours and knowledge gaps:

	Existing **complaint and response mechanisms**
	Verbal feedback from community during information sharing sessions
	Monitoring of **social media**
	Assessing **community understanding and knowledge** (see sample questions in the box)

- What do you understand about COVID-19?
- Have you heard something that you are not sure is true?
- Is there any concern you would like to share?
- What information do you need about COVID-19?

B) HOW YOU CAN REPORT RUMOURS

Report any rumour, misinformation, knowledge gap or concern in the community to UNHCR through:

	COVID-19 Rumour Hotline: 09 724 23137 (Call, Viber or SMS from Mon to Fr from 9 AM to 5 PM)
	E-mail to: Nay Zaw Tun tunnay@unhcr.org or Zaw Win Aung aungz@unhcr.org

C) HOW WE WILL MANAGE RUMOURS

All reported rumours will be added to the **Rumour Tracking Table**, which can be accessed here. The collected data will then be analyzed by a team to identify what the key themes are and which rumours need to be addressed most urgently based on the following questions:

- Could this rumour harm the community or promote risky behaviour?
- Does this rumour present a security risk to specific groups within the community?
- Could this rumour put your staff, or other service providers at risk?
- Could this rumour discourage or prevent people from accessing services?

Based on the data analysis, concrete actions and response will be decided in close collaboration with WHO and MoHS for each specific rumour. For harmless rumours this can be simply to add an answer based on facts from a credible source to the Q&A and circulate the updated version amongst camp-based staff. If a rumour could lead to harmful or risky behaviour or even become a security risk for certain groups, then we will develop specific messages and a communication strategy to counter the false information.

D) A FEW THINGS YOU NEED TO CONSIDER WHEN DISSEMINATING MESSAGES AND COLLECTING RUMOURS

Keep yourself updated about the latest developments - Read the Q&A and get the latest information from MoHS before going to the community to share and collect information. You can be an important source of information for the community.

Manage expectations - When collecting rumours or assessing information gaps, it is important to manage expectations. You won't have all the answers, and you might not be able to provide them later. It is essential to let the community know this and to be transparent. Tell that you will share their questions and concerns with relevant organisations, however this will not guarantee that all their needs can be met.

Include all parts of a community - Often the most vulnerable people are the least likely to have access to the information or assistance that may be available for them. Therefore, it is vitally important that those collecting interactions actively seek out vulnerable groups.

Consult trusted community members - Health workers, religious workers, teachers and other service providers interact with a wide variety of community members, and they are often already trusted sources of information. They are often amongst the first ones to receive rumours or to be aware of existing information gaps.

Adjust your communication with communities in line with the COVID-19 prevention measures - Having face-to-face interactions builds trust and it is the preferred channel of receiving information in central Rakhine. Maintain always social distancing of minimum 3 feets while disseminating and collecting information in the community. Only share information to small groups of not more than 10 persons. When going around in the communities, make sure that you frequently wash you hands and avoid touching your mouth, nose and eyes.