



3RD VIRTUAL GLOBAL WHO INFODEMIC MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE

Overview of COVID-19 infodemic and health
misinformation response in Namibia

DIGITAL POSTER

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infodemic
MANAGEMENT

Coordination, resourcing and strategy

Strategy

At the moment, Namibia has no infodemic management strategy or policy in place. However, rumors and miss information are addressed under the RCCE Pillar (responding to COVID-19) through Media Monitoring and rumor management which forms part of the Standards of Operations. This is being done in conjunction with the Public Relations Office.

Coordination

The subject of infodemic is relatively new to Namibia, hence, policies, and strategies are underway following the recent infodemic training. This will allow the country to gain knowledge and understanding on the importance and the best strategies to be employed to manage infodemic. Also, identify an infodemic manager under the RCCE pillar for the country

Resourcing

At the moment, Namibia has no stand-alone budget for infodemic management. However, infodemic activities such as media engagement are included in the RCCE budget. The country also does not have a dedicated person/unit at the Ministry of Health or Institute of Public Health/CDC for tracking and addressing misinformation?

Working relationships across society- Namibia has a strong strategy for coordination and collaboration with partners within government and outside government. The RCCE's SOP has clearly outlined the activities with other ministries, UN agencies, Civil Society Organizations, and other partners. However, there is a need to build and strengthen relations with media houses, fact-checking organizations, and technology companies for the management of infodemic response as well as health infodemic related issues

Integrated measurement, research and data analysis

- Namibia has no specific indicator set for monitoring health misinformation and its impacts
- There are no Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that exist on how to track conversation narratives and address information voids and misinformation, using an agreed taxonomy.
- No Indicators for tracking narratives and misinformation and how it affects target and vulnerable populations are defined and regularly tracked.
- There are no Tools used for social listening (online and offline) and analysis are customized for the local social listening needs for the ministry of health and the institution relies on data from other institutions and unregulated sites and programs.
- The country is slacking in Multi-disciplinary research design, analysis, and triangulation of diverse data sources to feed into intervention design, such as
- Very little is done to manage infodemic and there is no evidence of subnational use of infodemic management tools and principles
- The country has recorded interventions (beyond messaging) for target audiences and contexts that encourage appropriate health behaviors. Such as the use of technology tools to disseminate messages and through community engagement activities.

Reporting and integration into decision-making

- There are no Social listening, infodemic preparedness, and response activities conducted on a daily basis due to the absence of a reporting system,
- RCCE pillar with support from UN has developed a dashboard in the Talk Walker app. Monthly reports are drawn on what public are talking, perceptions etc. Reports drawn informs the RCCE on hot topics , public perceptions for that month. However, expansion of this social listening tool still needs to be done, that is analyse and monitoring trends. It needs to be done by the RCCE Soc media monitoring sub-group.
- There are no insights from social listening or infodemic response activities that are not triangulated with other socio-behavioral and epidemiological data to inform program and policy design.

Reporting and integration into decision-making

- Before the COVID-19 pandemic, health education was given after time or when the need arises. However, during the pandemic, it was evident that the messages have been frequently communicated to the public to ensure that communities are aware and informed about the signs and symptoms, prevention, and how to care for themselves and family
- The minister of health has been giving a COVID-19 national update on a daily basis and he has managed to debunk and diffuse rumors on covid-19 publicly.
- The country also established a communication center which is used as a media center to engage the public and provide relevant information to the public and the public is able to call in the studio and ask questions and the participants provide answers. The sessions are usually streaming live on social media and broadcasting on different radio language stations.
- Community engagement activities to engage communities and stakeholder on burial procedures which caused havoc among communities through focused groups

Designing and development

- The country has activated the National Health emergency response committee which includes the RCCE Pillar both at the national and regional level under the supervision of the ministry of health and social services As a ministry of health and social services responsible for the health of the Namibian people and as a leader in the covid-19 pandemic.
- Once a communication need is identified and a rumor has been identified, the team strategically develop and design messages to refute the miss information and provide correct information. The information is usually disseminated through various platform e.g. posters



Lesson learned

- Due to the complexity of Namibia, it is important to use various media platforms to address the identified infodemics and not only limit to social media.
- Timing of message delivery is critical in an evolving pandemic
- A Rumor Management mechanism is important from the very beginning because consistent messaging is critical in a flood of misinformation, disinformation and rumors.
- The lack of infordemic system compromise the country's response to address infodemics.
- Namibia needs to develop an infordemic management system plan.
- The country looks forward to learning from the experience of other countries that have already developed their infordemic plans and strategies for combating the COVID-19 pandemic

Way forward

- To provide training on infodemic management to RCCE Pillar and other relevant pillars too
- Develop multisectoral multi-stakeholder skillsets that can be used to support infodemic response
- Develop an infodemic management strategy with accountabilities and budget which can be used to manage rumors, misinformation, and harmful impact of infodemic on the health of communities and individuals
- Identified tools and approaches that the country can use to design interventions with real-time monitoring and feedback on the state and impact of the infodemic on people's motivations, decisions to pursue self-protective or healthy behaviors.