



COVID-19 RUMOUR TRACKING REPORT

COMMUNITY BASED MIGRATION PROGRAMME

TURKEY, SEPTEMBER 2021



COVID-19 Rumour Tracking Report

**Turkish Red Crescent Society (TRCS) in Collaboration with
International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)**

Prepared by

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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in both a public health crisis, and a humanitarian crisis, affecting the lives, health, and livelihoods of people around the world. In Turkey, understanding of the COVID-19 outbreak is rapidly evolving, however, the information needs, and misconceptions can still vary in accordance with the flow of the pandemic. There have been information gaps, misconceptions, and rumours about the virus, from the beginning of the pandemic which can create social tension or lead to practising harmful behaviour. It is critical to capture rumours and information needs and act on the feedback, concerns of the communities we work with, to provide relevant life-saving information, adjust our operational response, and build long-term trust.

Within the scope of IFRC supported COVID-19 response project targeting refugees and host population in Turkey, Turkish Red Crescent Society (TRCS) have been collecting rumours on COVID-19 related issues from the community to monitor, address and cover information gaps, beliefs and misconceptions, questions and to inform health approaches.



Disclaimer: The maps used do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies or National Societies concerning the legal status of a territory or of its authorities

Map 1 Turkey: provinces with an active TRCS Community Centre

Rumour Tracking

Rumour is defined as unverified information that is transmitted from one person to others. The word rumour often has negative connotations – often dismissed as being idle talk or gossip. However, rumours are neither inherently good nor bad. They can be either true or false, or a mixture of both. Especially, in the context of a health emergencies as COVID-19 pandemic, misperceptions and rumours can create social tension in a community or lead to practising harmful behaviour. Additionally, the misinformation and rumours in social media can cause people to further undermine health information and therefore they should be responded by providing communities with the accurate information.

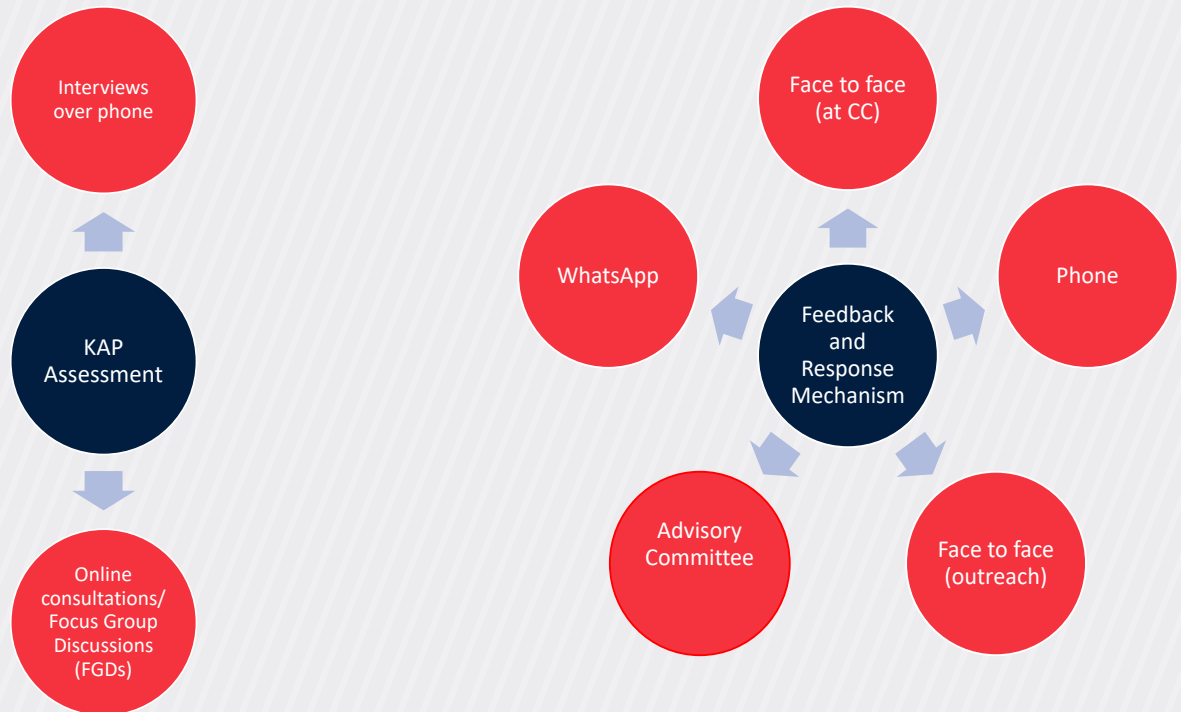
Within the scope of IFRC supported COVID-19 response project targeting refugees and host population in Turkey, TRCS have been collecting rumours on COVID-19 related issues from the community to monitor, address and cover information gaps, beliefs and misconceptions, questions and to inform health approaches.

Rumours have been collected through two different ways: i) Knowledge, Practice and Attitude (KAP) assessments collected through phone interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and ii) the TRCS community centre feedback mechanism constituting of different channels to receive and respond to rumours (face to face, phone, etc).

How to collect rumours?

KAP Assessment

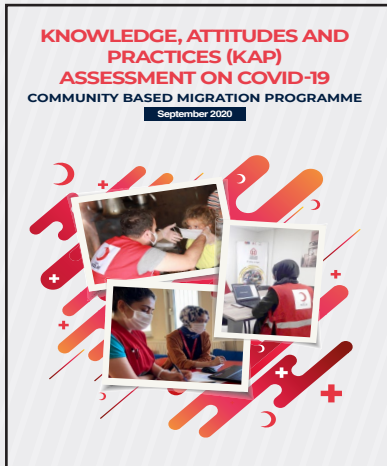
Feedback Mechanism



KAP Assessments - as a way of collecting rumours

KAP assessments were conducted to understand refugee and local communities' knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP), along with their information needs on COVID-19, by TRCS, with support from IFRC. The assessment helps us to understand what people know, what they believe, what they do and what are the rumours and misperceptions in relation to COVID-19 and is a community engagement tool to help us listen to people and improve our work. The results support TRCS to provide clear and accurate information about COVID-19 and vaccination and respond to any misperceptions and rumours in the community.

In KAP assessments the rumours are collected through the phone interviews and FGDs. Under the Knowledge part of the KAP assessments the communities were asked if they heard anything about the coronavirus that they are not sure if it is true or not and the rumours were listed down if they heard one. It was identified that in the first round of the KAP assessment the rumours were mostly related to the denial of COVID-19, food that can protect people from getting infected and how the virus spreads. In the second-round of the assessment treatment, and vaccine for the disease were added to the previous rumour topics in accordance with the changing environment of pandemic. Compared to the previous assessments, more rumours around COVID-19 vaccine were reported in the third round relating to its safety, reliability, and health risks. Other rumours were about denial of COVID-19, actions to prevent COVID-19 and how it could spread and most of which were similar to the previous rounds. It should be pointed out that stigma and negative attitude towards those infected with COVID-19 were also among the rumours collected during the KAP assessments.



KAP 1

(20 July-12 August 2020)

- Rumours spread mostly via word of mouth and social media
- Topics; denial of COVID-19, food that can protect and how it spreads.

"There is no coronavirus",

"We can protect ourselves with onion, garlic and olive oil",

"Local people are not infected by coronavirus."

KAP 2

(10-26 November 2020)

- Rumours spread mostly via word of mouth and social media
- Topics; denial of COVID-19, actions to prevent COVID-19, treatment, or vaccine for the disease.

"Coronavirus is not a serious disease. It is just like having a flu."

"Eating garlic, lemon and onion can protect you from coronavirus."

"Medicines and vaccines being developed to treat COVID-19 are not safe."



KAP 3

(12 March-9 April 2021)

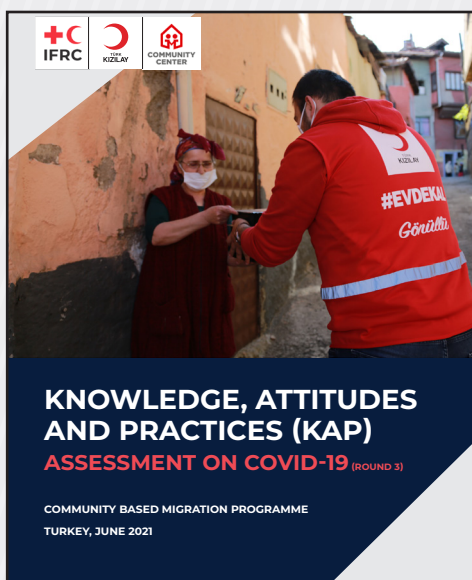
- Rumours spread mostly via word of mouth and social media
- Topics; COVID-19 vaccine safety, reliability, and health risks. Denial of COVID-19, the ending of pandemic and conspiracies.

"Vaccines do not protect you from the virus."

"Vaccines increase the risks of heart attack."

"Coronavirus has lost its potency."

"The virus is actually a chemical product."



Addressing rumours (KAP)

The rumours were addressed to provide clear and accurate information via **different channels** in **different languages** to **reach both refugee and local communities**. Audio-visual and textual materials such as factual information brochure, frequently asked questions and videos produced based on the collected rumours and misperceptions in coordination with the TRCS public health department and TRCS communications team on various topics related to COVID-19. The materials were shared on social media account of TRCS CC, through WhatsApp, in online community meetings and advisory committee meetings. Stigma related rumours and concerns were addressed producing videos explaining the term stigma and its consequences and online community meetings were held to promote acceptance and trust.



Feedback Mechanism- as a way of collecting rumours

As part of the IFRC supported COVID-19 response project targeting refugees and host population in Turkey, staff and volunteers of Turkish Red Crescent Society (TRCS) under the Community Based Migration Programme (CBMP) have been collecting and responding to communities' questions, feedback, complaints and rumours at each of its 16 Community Centres (CCs) across the country. The CEA team was instrumental in developing the feedback forms through KoBo toolbox, developing TORs for staff and volunteers collecting the data and delivering an orientation session and providing written guidelines on how to use the form for this feedback mechanism.

From June 2020 until the end of July 2021, 1469 issues collected through the feedback mechanism. Among the 1469 issues, 222 were rumours which is 15% of all the issues. Most of the rumours are categorized under the "Other" category. Under the "Other" category the rumours were mostly related to TRCS support on cash assistance, rental assistance or distributing tablets for remote education. Followingly, respondents delivered rumours on COVID-19 situation in Turkey, perception about those infected or recovered.

Verifying and Responding Rumours

Rumours can be responded instantly to the community member if it is already verified, or it requires a proper verification and standardised response unless there is already existing verified information about the rumour. To verify and respond the rumour the timeframe is two weeks. Once verified, TRCS staff shares the factual information with the community members over phone, advisory committee and through visual materials in its social media platforms. Based on the analyses of the feedback mechanism, it was observed that most of the rumours have been responded immediately so far in accordance with the already verified information. For other rumours, the time taken to verify, and respond was an average of 1 day. The channel most frequently used by community members to share rumours was phone. Face to face at the Community Centres was the second most preferred channel used by people.

The context for the bulletins are prepared by the CC staff and confirmed with HQ CEA focal point before sharing. The narrative for factual information is entered into these bulletins and shared with community members. A dashboard is developed by the data officer to track all the issues including rumours that was collected through feedback mechanism regularly. Community feedback reports presenting the analysis and overview of the issues were prepared and published, this way it can be ensured that all the relevant programmes and stakeholders are informed regarding the issues and responses.

1469

issues
were
collected



Rumour: “We heard that the house rental support provided by the community centre will continue”.

Answer: The rental assistance provided by TRCS Community Centers is a one-off assistance. The assistance will not be provided again if you benefited one time.

Rumour: “I heard Turkish courses are being started to be conducted face to face at the Community Centres. How can I register?”

Answer: A new Turkish course was not opened in the Community Centers, registration is not available at this process.



[Video Link 1](#)
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[Video Link 2](#)
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[Video Link 3](#)
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[Video Link 4](#)
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Challenges

Some of the rumours are very specific depending on the region where they are heard or their content. It was one of the challenges to find an accurate source for very specific rumours such as food preventing infection, protecting people from Covid-19 or some very local rumours. There are also fatalistic points of view and denial of Covid-19 which is challenging to combat. Motivating communities to share feedback or rumours on any issues requires an organized and well-planned effort promoting the feedback mechanism and it was another challenge. Additionally, at the recent stage of the pandemic there is a pandemic fatigue and people are less interested to share any issues including rumours related to COVID-19.

Conclusion

The rumors collected through both KAP assessments and the feedback mechanism change over time to the course of the pandemic. In addition to this change, foods to prevent COVID-19, denial of COVID-19, and stigmatization of the infected people were among the most common rumor topics during the pandemic.

The rumours are verified, responded and addressed via different methods and channels in different languages to prevent any harmful practices or stigmatization. To verify and address the rumours TRCS and IFRC CEA teams coordinated with TRCS public health department and TRCS communications team on various topics related to COVID-19. Produced materials shared via social media accounts, via WhatsApp groups and through online and face to face community meetings including Advisory Committee meetings.

It was experienced that establishing systems to monitor rumors on a regular basis and having an effective feedback mechanism ensures that rumours are responded with accurate information in a timely manner, prevents the unhealthy practices, tension and stigma between communities, and strengthens the connection between the community and the National Society.

ANNEX-1; FGD participants shared various rumours regarding COVID-19 (KAP-1)

SI NO	Rumours	Location
1	There is no coronavirus.	Kahramanmaraş, Şanlıurfa, İstanbul European Side, Mersin
2	Coronavirus will infect you anyways. So, you don't need to pay attention to preventive measures.	Mardin, Kahramanmaraş
3	Mask does not protect individuals.	İstanbul European Side
4	The virus is not spread by air or physical contact.	Kahramanmaraş
5	We can protect ourselves with onion, garlic and olive oil.	Mardin
6	If you wear a mask, you will not be infected.	Kilis
7	Coronavirus can contaminate meat. Do not buy meat.	Kilis
8	Garlic, onion and coffee are protectors against the virus.	Kayseri
9	The virus only affects older people.	Gaziantep
10	Children are not infected by coronavirus.	İstanbul European Side
11	Coronavirus does not infect pregnant women.	Gaziantep
12	The virus does not infect young people.	Kayseri
13	Those who have recovered from coronavirus have a high risk of getting Alzheimer's disease in future.	İzmir
14	The number of coronavirus cases are not accurate.	İzmir, Kahramanmaraş
15	The virus is mostly spread during the winter season.	Kocaeli
16	The virus disappears when the weather gets hot.	Kocaeli, Mardin, Bursa
17	The virus dies when it rains.	Kocaeli
18	The virus can stay in the air for 15 days.	Kocaeli
19	The virus is spread by the rain.	Kocaeli
20	The virus can be cured if we eat sumac plant.	Mardin, Bursa, Kayseri, Şanlıurfa
21	Soup made with sheep's head and foot is good to treat coronavirus.	Mardin, İstanbul European Side, Kilis
22	The virus dies if it reaches the stomach.	Mardin
23	If you eat fruits, you will not be infected.	Şanlıurfa
24	The virus can spread from food.	İstanbul Anatolian Side
25	Those who have recovered can be infected by coronavirus for a second time.	İstanbul Anatolian Side
26	We heard there are no vacant beds in Yüreğir State Hospital because of the increase in the number of cases in Adana last week. The patients are sent to other cities for treatment.	Adana
27	A person can be infected with coronavirus through cigarette smoke.	Ankara
28	There is no risk of getting coronavirus from swimming pools.	Kahramanmaraş
29	Vinegar prevents coronavirus.	Bursa, Şanlıurfa
30	A vaccine to treat coronavirus has been developed.	Ankara, İstanbul European Side
31	Coronavirus will not infect you if you perform ablution.	Bursa, Kilis, Mersin
32	The virus will go away if you read prayers.	Kahramanmaraş

ANNEX-2; FGD participants shared various rumours regarding COVID-19 (KAP-2)

SI NO	Rumours	Location
1	There is no coronavirus.	İstanbul European Side, Kahramanmaraş, Mersin, Hatay
2	Coronavirus is not a serious disease. It is just like having a flu.	Bursa, Hatay, İzmir
3	You can be safe if you put garlic inside your mask.	Bursa
4	Drinking alcohol is effective to treat coronavirus.	Bursa
5	If you drink olive oil, no virus will infect you.	Bursa
6	Drink holy water.	Bursa
7	Wearing a mask is more harmful than not wearing one.	Bursa
8	Eating garlic and taking quinine ¹³ , antibiotics and vitamins are effective in treating coronavirus.	Gaziantep
9	Eating garlic, lemon, sumac plant, onion and drinking coffee can protect you from coronavirus.	Kayseri, Kilis
10	Ginger water, fish oil are good protectors against coronavirus.	İstanbul European Side
11	Fish meat and sumac plant can protect you from the virus.	Kocaeli
12	If you are young, then you are immune to the disease.	Bursa
13	In Istanbul, the number of coronavirus cases are increasing.	Gaziantep
14	We cannot breathe comfortably when we wear a mask. Wearing a mask also causes certain diseases. This is because the air we breathe in comes into contact with harmful chemicals on the mask which can be detrimental to a person's health.	İzmir
15	The virus does not transmit via air or physical contact.	Kahramanmaraş
16	Some people who were vaccinated had a heart attack.	Gaziantep
17	People who got vaccinated will die within 45 days.	Hatay
18	The vaccine will alter or change the human DNA.	Hatay
19	The vaccine is used to diminish the human population.	Hatay, İstanbul Anatolian Side
20	The vaccine causes rabies.	Hatay
21	The vaccine causes death.	Hatay
22	The vaccine causes physical impairments.	Hatay
23	The vaccine causes genetic disorders.	Hatay
24	We heard that the vaccine causes infertility.	Izmir, Mardin, İstanbul Anatolian Side
25	The vaccine is not protective.	Kahramanmaraş , Kayseri
26	Syrians are not infected by COVID-19.	Kahramanmaraş
27	The vaccine is not reliable.	Kahramanmaraş
28	If I had the vaccine, I would still be infected by COVID-19.	Kahramanmaraş
29	Those who are vaccinated can fall sick.	Kayseri
30	Vaccines will only be given to the older people and those with chronic diseases.	Kayseri
31	Vaccines will be paid.	Kayseri
32	Vaccine can cause heart attack.	Kilis

ANNEX-3; FGD participants shared various rumours regarding COVID-19 vaccines in Turkey (KAP-3)

SI NO	Rumours	Location
1	Vaccination can cause different diseases in the future.	Adana
2	The vaccine may cause allergic reactions in our body.	Adana
3	There are microchips in the vaccines.	Adana
4	The vaccine has no effect against the mutated variants.	Ankara
5	The vaccine is sold to countries for commercial purpose.	Ankara, İstanbul Anatolian Side, Kilis
6	People who will not receive the vaccine cannot benefit from certain rights or benefits.	Ankara
7	The vaccine is not good. It has negative side effects.	Ankara
8	Remaining priority groups will need to pay to get the vaccine.	Ankara
9	Some people had a brief facial paralysis after vaccination.	Ankara, Şanlıurfa
10	Coronavirus is a lie. There is no such virus. Other countries have created this virus.	Ankara
11	I think we are tracked with the vaccine, so that we can be infected with other diseases.	Ankara
12	The vaccine has increased autism and caused the death of some people.	İstanbul European Side
13	Vaccines are developed to inject substance in the human body and control people more easily.	Bursa
14	There are microchips in the vaccines. By putting in microchips in the vaccine, people can be trailed, and their personal information can be shared with the government.	Bursa, İstanbul Anatolian Side
15	Vaccines are not effective.	Gaziantep
16	Some people who were vaccinated had a heart attack.	Gaziantep
17	People who got vaccinated will die within 45 days.	Hatay
18	The vaccine will alter or change the human DNA.	Hatay
19	The vaccine is used to diminish the human population.	Hatay, İstanbul Anatolian Side
20	The vaccine causes rabies.	Hatay
21	The vaccine causes death.	Hatay
22	The vaccine causes physical impairments.	Hatay
23	The vaccine causes genetic disorders.	Hatay
24	We heard that the vaccine causes infertility.	Izmir, Mardin, İstanbul Anatolian Side
25	The vaccine is not protective.	Kahramanmaraş , Kayseri
26	Syrians are not infected by COVID-19.	Kahramanmaraş
27	The vaccine is not reliable.	Kahramanmaraş
28	If I had the vaccine, I would still be infected by COVID-19.	Kahramanmaraş
29	Those who are vaccinated can fall sick.	Kayseri
30	Vaccines will only be given to the older people and those with chronic diseases.	Kayseri
31	Vaccines will be paid.	Kayseri
32	Vaccine can cause heart attack.	Kilis

ANNEX-4; Feedback mechanism participants shared various rumours regarding COVID-19

SI NO	Rumours	Location
1	The cases are increasing in Adana province.	Adana
2	They called us and said that TRCS is distributing tablets, how can we get them?	Bursa
3	Only Syrians can apply for the hygiene kit.	Adana
4	The Covid-19 does not exist, we haven't seen it.	Hatay
5	Covid-19 is not transmitted to children aged 0-5.	Hatay
6	If we perform ablution and the prayer, the corona will not affect us.	Kocaeli
7	Drinking thyme juice destroys the virus.	Mardin
8	If we drink virgin olive oil, the possibility of transmission of the virus will decrease.	Mardin
9	Fake coronavirus tests are sold on the market and people who bought them are victimized.	Mersin
10	People are starting to heal, the virus has lost its effect.	Şanlıurfa
11	We heard that face-to-face Turkish courses started at the Community Center. How can we register?	Bursa
12	Smokers are less likely to get coronavirus.	Mardin
13	I heard that Covid-19 vaccine causes infertility, I read comments about it on social media.	Mardin
14	There is no coronavirus, it is just a flu.	Mardin
15	Eating raw garlic daily protects you from the coronavirus and it has an antibiotic effect.	Mardin
16	Some of the people who got vaccinated were passed away.	Şanlıurfa
17	Turmeric and garlic have a positive effect against coronavirus.	Mardin
18	Coronavirus is not contagious.	Kahramanmaraş
19	The coronavirus spreads more in winter.	Mardin
20	Heat from the sun and vitamin D prevent covid-19.	İzmir
21	We have heard that TRCS provides 1000 TL cash support.	Mardin
22	Food voucher is distributed to everyone from TRCS.	Hatay
23	Covid-19 is an operation to reduce population.	Hatay
24	Syrians are not infected with coronavirus.	Mardin
25	It was stated that the juice of the boiled olive leaves work to prevent coronavirus.	Mardin
26	There is pig gene in the Covid-19 vaccines.	Şanlıurfa
27	The vaccine causes serious diseases for the elderly people, but does not affect young people.	Mardin
28	Coronavirus contraction decreases when the weather gets warmer.	Mardin
29	There is no need to take precautions after the Covid-19 vaccine.	Adana
30	Covid-19 vaccines should be paid.	Adana
31	Those who are vaccinated against Covid-19 are not at risk of getting infected.	Adana



Who we are

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the world's largest humanitarian organization, reaching 150 million people in 192 National Societies, including Turkish Red Crescent (Türk Kızılay) through the work of 13.7 million volunteers.

Together, we act before, during and after disasters and health emergencies to meet the needs and improve the lives of vulnerable people. We provide assistance without discrimination as to nationality, race, gender, religious beliefs, class or political opinions.



The Turkish Red Crescent (Türk Kızılay) is the largest humanitarian organization in Turkey, to help vulnerable people in and out of disasters for years, both in the country and abroad. Millions of people currently receive support through our programmes in cooperation with the Government of Turkey. We are supporting vulnerable people, including refugees, Turkish communities, those impacted by disasters and other groups in need of humanitarian assistance.

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