

HAND-OUT
Faith and Positive Change for Children (FPCC)
Training Webinar 1A ESAR FPCC Webinar series

**Common Myths and Rumours related to
COVID Misinformation, Stigma and Discrimination**

Below is a list of Rumors & Misinformation, Stigma & Discrimination gathered from ESAR C4D Section; Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities/Berkley Center at Georgetown University faith and COVID-19 repository, and other online articles.

In your groups of three, choose the most relevant myth for your context. Then discuss:

- What causes / drives the myth in your context?
- What scriptures contradict it / show us how to act against it? (choose one from each faith represented in your group)

Rumors & Misinformation

- Masks
 - Wearing masks displays a lack of faith and increases the risk of infection.
 - Masks covered with chemicals are used to knock people out and rob them.
- False Cures
 - COVID-19 can be cured by 'spiritual vaccines'
 - Buying and ingesting chlorine dioxide, magic beans, Old Brown Sherry (etc.) will prevent you from getting COVID-19.
 - "Miracle masks" / herbs / sanitizer that God told me to use will protect me.
 - Steam treats COVID-19.
 - The WHO approves at-home remedies for COVID-19.
 - Nothing can be done to help elderly people who have COVID-19; they will certainly die.
 - Test kits give fake results.
- Closing Places of Worship
 - The government is persecuting us when they close / limit our faith gatherings.
 - The government plans to keep churches closed forever.
 - God will be angry if our faith gatherings stop.
- Religious / Rituals Rumors
 - Prayer will save me from COVID-19; I do not need to follow health guidelines.
 - God sent the Coronavirus to punish us for our sin.
 - The Devil created Coronavirus
 - COVID-19 is a divine punishment against non-believers and Europeans
 - Spreading God's word (proslytizing) is the most important thing right now, so we should reach as many people as possible.
 - If I don't bury my relative to our faith customs, they will not go to Paradise and be at peace.
 - Only non-Muslims can contract COVID-19 as fate is determined by Allah
 - Those who "fight for Jesus" can rely on prayer rather than hospitals

- Government Conspiracies
 - Lockdown served no purpose.
 - Governments are using the virus as a pretense for increased surveillance
 - "The ANC govt knows something that we don't know. #COVID19inSA" [in reference to an TV screenshot captioned as "more than a million gravesites prepared in Guateng"]
 - COVID-19 is hitting harder in the most corrupt countries (Nigeria, Mali, Sudan, Kenya, Guinea-Bissau).
 - Some countries have launched COVID remedies (Lesotho).
 - Burundi's President Nkurunziza died from COVID-19
 - South Africa's president used COVID-19 as an excuse to create an 11-hour school day.
 - Fake advertisements for jobs and resources (phones) for helping with COVID-19.
- Global Rumors
 - Africans are being exploited as "guinea pigs" in vaccine trials.
 - The West is 'cowardly and panicking' for taking COVID-19 seriously
 - COVID-19 is a "white man's disease."
 - COVID-19 is a bioweapon developed by China to destroy the West
 - Jews have created the virus to collapse the economy for financial gain.
- "Doomsday" Rumors
 - COVID-19 is a manufactured bio-weapon created by Bill Gates, the government, and big companies. The vaccination will insert a microchip into our bodies to increase government surveillance.
 - The vaccine will do nothing; it is a complete scam for pharmaceutical companies to make money.
 - The word *coronavirus* — derived from the Latin word for "crown" — is "not coincidental but is linked to the coronation and enthronement of the Antichrist."
 - The COVID-19 vaccine is a satanic plan to microchip people or introduce other foreign devices into the human body through 5G technology

Stigma & Discrimination

- Xenophobia
 - Refugees are stigmatized and turned away at country borders, and online hate speech against internal "foreigners" has increased
 - COVID-19 is referred to as the "Chinese Virus" by some Western leaders
 - China and immigrants are to blame for transmitting the virus
- Religious Discrimination
 - Jews and Zionists are to blame for transmitting the virus
 - Orthodox Jewish neighborhoods have been labeled "coronavirus villages"
 - Jews and Muslims are responsible for creating and spreading the Coronavirus
 - Muslims have been targeted for extended quarantines and have been stopped from selling in markets
 - Official governmental messaging regarding large gatherings has targeted Muslim gatherings and not other faiths

- Certain religious minorities are denied healthcare and are not invited to COVID-19 response planning meetings
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- Racism
 - Minority groups (choose the most relevant) should be attacked on social media platforms for spreading the virus.
 - African-Americans are disproportionately contracting and dying from COVID-19 due to deep racial biases in the American health care system
- Health Stigma
 - We should avoid doctors, nurses and health clinics because they will give us the virus.
 - People who do “dirty work” like sanitation should be avoided.
 - People who already carry diseases (HIV/AIDS, leprosy, etc.) are more likely to have COVID and should be ostracized.
 - Stigma is causing people to shun and avoid health personnel who treat COVID-19 patients
 - Social stigma is causing resistance to burying people who died from COVID-19 in cemeteries and admitting COVID-19 suspected patients to hospitals
- Sexism
 - If a girl becomes pregnant during lockdown, she must be at fault, too.
 - Beating a woman is an appropriate response if she acquires COVID.
 - Dawn-to-dusk curfews have caused gender-based domestic violence to rise and has decreased access to domestic violence services
 - COVID-19 is punishing women for “dishonorable” activities such as not following their husbands, not treating men as men, and not obeying religion
- Governmental discrimination
 - The pandemic has heightened human rights abuses against religious minorities in China; detainment camps are unhygienic and cases are under-reported
 - People who speak out against the government’s handling of the Coronavirus deserve to be punished by the government or the community.
 - Authorities can overemphasize contact tracing activities in some communities, which feeds into fear and discrimination
- General
 - COVID-19 is linked with sin, especially same-sex relationships
 - The virus is divine punishment against _____ (choose the most relevant).
 - Foreigners/youth/minority religious or ethnic groups (choose the most relevant) are dangerous and responsible for spreading COVID-19.
 - _____ is responsible for creating and spreading COVID-19 and therefore should be punished (whichever minority group is being blamed in your area).
 - We should only worry about our own people and not help others.
 - _____ is not worthy of medical care because of who they are or something that they did.
 - Hate speech on social media has increased during COVID-19

Sources

JLI/Berkley Center Daily/Weekly Reports

Stigma & Discrimination

- #1, March 18, "[Interfaith Groups Refocusing Efforts](#)"
- #29, April 15, "[Ugly Reports of Islamophobia and Anti-Semitism Linked to COVID-19 Crisis](#)"
- #41, April 27, "[The Case of the Samaritan's Purse Hospital in Central Park](#)"
- #43, April 29, "[Refugees Caught in the COVID-19 Crisis: Rohingyas in Malaysia](#)"
- #68, May 24, "[COVID-19 Dampens Eid Celebrations Worldwide](#)"
- #76, June 1, "[Religious Responses to Domestic Abuse During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)"
- #77, June 2, "[COVID-19 in Africa: Puzzles, Positive News, Religious Roles](#)"
- #78, June 3, "[Rising Stigma Amid the Pandemic: India's Muslim Community](#)"
- #79, June 4, "[Response to COVID-19 in Latino Churches](#)"
- #83, June 8, "[Infodemics: Bangladesh Illustrates Links Between COVID-19 and Discrimination](#)"
- #88, June 13, "[The Vatican, COVID-19, and Religious Freedom](#)"
- #90, June 15, "[Frontline Christian Sanitation Workers in Pakistan Face Discrimination](#)"
- #94, June 19, "[Juneteenth Edition: Black Churches Confront Compounding Crises](#)"
- #95, June 20, "[To Know in Order to Understand: Faith and World Refugee Day 2020](#)"
- #98, June 23, "[How Stigma Links to COVID-19 in Indonesia](#)"
- #103, June 28, "[Minorities During the COVID-19 Crisis: The Case of Uganda](#)"
- #106, July 1, "[Deep Prejudices Surface During the COVID-19 Crisis](#)"
- #110, July 5, "[Hindu Perspective on the COVID-19 Emergency \(Example of response to discrim\)](#)"
- #112, July 7, "[Human Rights, Freedom of Religion or Belief, and COVID-19](#)"
- #114, July 15, "[1st Weekly Highlight](#)"
- #115, July 22, "[2nd Weekly Highlight](#)"
- #116, July 29, "[3rd Weekly Highlight](#)"
- #117, August 5, "[Midsummer Doldrums \(4th Weekly Highlight\)](#)"
- #119, August 19, "[Keeping Communities Safe and Respected](#)"
- #129, October 28, "[Freedom of Religion or Belief During Coronavirus Outbreaks \(Example of fighting discrim\)](#)"

Rumors & Misinformation

- #8, March 25, "[Religion and development academic speaks out on religion, science, and COVID-19](#)"
- #14, March 31, "[Misinformation or an 'Infodemic': A Word of Caution](#)"
- #20, April 6, "[COVID-19: Impact on Extremism?](#)"
- #31, April 17, "[COVID-19 Crisis Highlights Complex Intertwining of Religious and Cultural Factors in Changing Public Health Behavior: The Somali Diaspora in Sweden](#)"

- #53, May 9, "[Japan's Religious Communities React to COVID-19](#)"
- #69, May 25, "[Brazil's Catholic Bishops Contest Government Policy on COVID-19](#)"
- #72, May 28, "[Russia: COVID-19 Causes Rumbles in Orthodox-State Relations](#)"
- #75, May 31, "[The COVID-19 Vaccine Challenge: Faith Fears?](#)"
- #77, June 2, "[COVID-19 in Africa: Puzzles, Positive News, Religious Roles](#)"
- #83, June 8, "['Infodemics': Bangladesh Illustrates Links Between COVID-19 and Discrimination](#)"
- #86, June 11, "[COVID-19 and Religious Responses in the Sahel](#)"
- #106, July 1, "[Deep Prejudices Surface During the COVID-19 Crisis](#)"
- #108, July 3, "[Refugee Perceptions Through the Lens of Religious Beliefs: Rohingya Camps](#)"
- #111, July 6, "[COVID-19, Soul-searching, and Honest Conversations](#)"
- #124, September 23, "[Messages, Information, and Misinformation](#)"
- #126, October 7, "[Emerging Research and Vaccination as a Public Good \(Example of fighting misinfo\)](#)"

Additional Articles

- Mokoena, Sibule. "[I am not selling miracle sanitizer -- Bushiri.](#)" *Malawi 24*, 22 June 2020.
- Omondi, Asher. "[Bungoma woman claims God showed her 7 shrubs to dispel COVID-19.](#)" *Tuko*, 2020.
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- "['An unquestionable truth': Religious misinformation in the coronavirus pandemic.](#)" *First Draft*, 27 August 2020.

Information also comes from the Faith and Positive Change for Children, Families, and Communities (FPCC) Training of Trainers Webinar 1A in the Eastern and Southern Africa Region (ESAR).