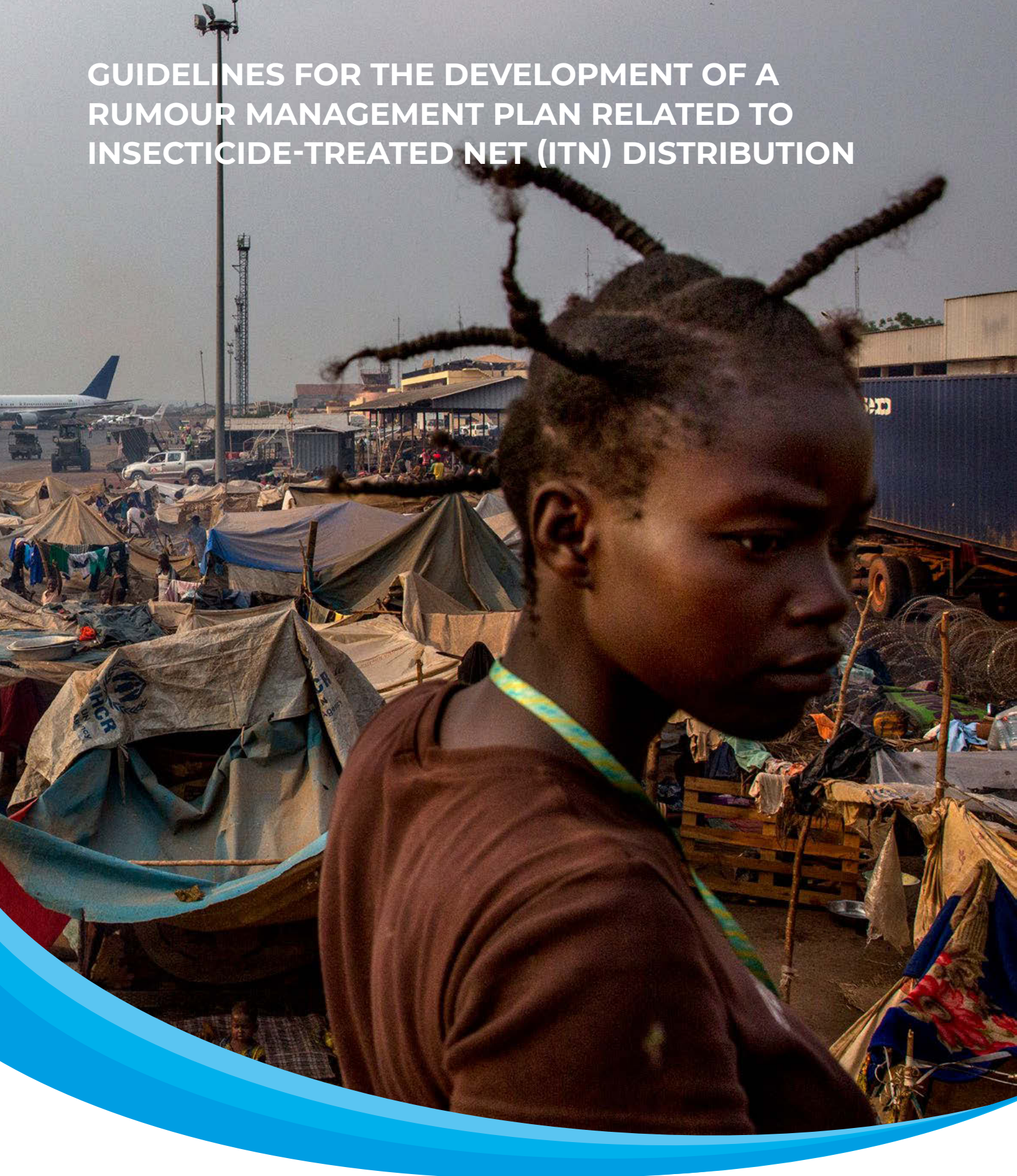


# GUIDELINES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A RUMOUR MANAGEMENT PLAN RELATED TO INSECTICIDE-TREATED NET (ITN) DISTRIBUTION



JUNE 2023

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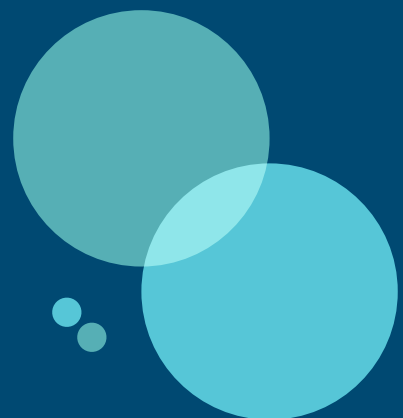
information session with the "Keke drivers' association" in Niger state to mobilize them for the ITN mass campaign.



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# INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

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Malaria remains one of the most dangerous diseases in the world, and the use of insecticide-treated mosquito nets (ITNs) continues to be one of the most effective ways of protecting people from the disease<sup>1</sup>. In most malaria endemic countries, national malaria programmes and partners distribute ITNs through mass distribution campaigns and continuous distribution channels. Routine distribution through health facilities is the most common continuous distribution channel and includes the distribution of ITNs to pregnant women through antenatal care (ANC) visits, and to children under five during routine immunization visits. For several years, national malaria programmes and their partners have adopted or are testing other continuous distribution channels, such as the distribution of ITNs to children through schools or at community level through community health workers (CHWs) in an effort to maintain ITN access and use at high levels.

Any ITN distribution method, however, can carry the risk of rumours (a generic term which for the purpose of this document includes misinformation and disinformation) arising. Since ITNs are only effective if they are used properly, negative rumours that are left to circulate during ITN distribution carry the risk of ITNs being rejected or not used. This in turn may cause a reduction in many of the gains that national malaria programmes have made in recent years to lessen the malaria burden in their country. Rumours are more likely to arise and spread rapidly during a mass distribution campaign when the distribution activity is most intense and generally targets the entire population in both rural and urban areas, but can also occur during continuous or routine distribution.

Several countries distributing ITNs during the COVID-19 pandemic experienced outbreaks of rumours linking COVID-19 with ITN campaigns or the ITNs themselves. The scope and scale of these rumours varied greatly, ranging from localized rumours that were quickly dispelled, to district level rumours that resulted in refusal to accept ITNs and even in the destruction of ITNs. Rumours surrounding ITNs, however, have been an issue well before the COVID-19 pandemic and include concerns about:

- The efficacy of the ITNs, including the claim that sleeping under an ITN will negatively affect sexual reproduction or fertility
- Culturally related rumours such as the belief that ITNs being distributed by a particular religious group would cause people from a different religious group to convert
- Politically motivated disinformation on the integrity of the ITN campaign (for example, the government is only distributing ITNs to get your vote)

More recently, there have been increasing reports of concerns about ITN quality that affect belief in the efficacy of ITNs to prevent malaria. Over several years, ITN quality issues have been raised at household, community, district and national levels which have implications for national malaria programmes in terms of creating and maintaining trust with the communities they serve. Rumours have included that ITNs received in recent distributions are “not as good as” nets previously received and that the government is purchasing poor quality ITNs and distributing them to specific communities (particularly in countries with different net brands or net types being targeted to different areas).

While it would be most effective to prevent

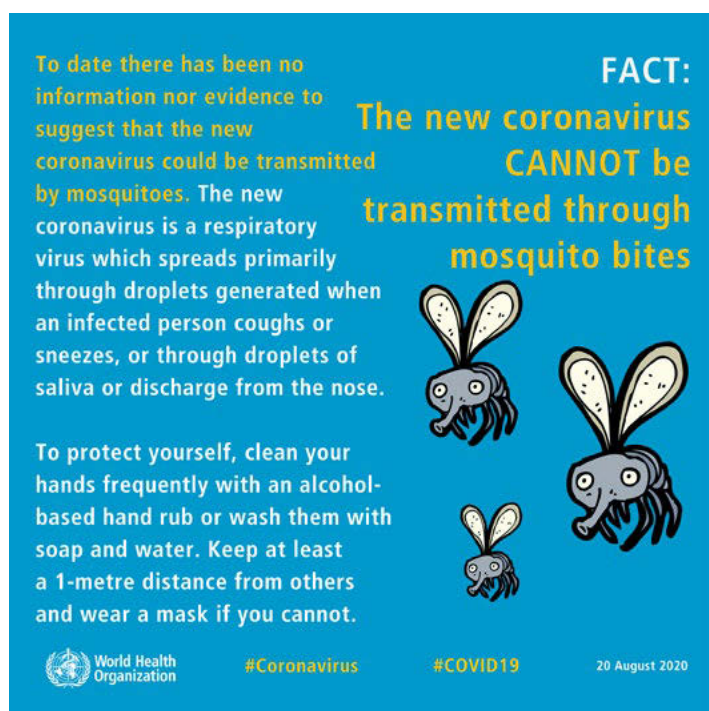
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1. <https://www.who.int/teams/global-malaria-programme/reports/world-malaria-report-2022>

them from happening, there is still a risk that rumours occur before, during or after an ITN campaign and during continuous distribution. It is therefore important to anticipate and mitigate potential risks as much as pos-

sible, and to design a process for managing risks that have not been anticipated, with a comprehensive rumour management plan.

**Figure 1:** Example of information put out widely to “bust a myth”



World Health Organization:  
<https://www.who.int/fr/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/myth-busters>

This document has been developed for national malaria programmes and partners to start thinking about and planning for rumour management early in the process of developing plans for ITN distribu-

tion through different channels, and to ensure that sufficient funding for social and behaviour change (SBC) exists to support efforts to get ITNs into households and used correctly.

# EMERGENCE OF RUMOURS

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Rumours often emerge when there is a **lack of accurate, credible, reliable information** or **too much of it**, resulting in conflicting information or an overload of information. In either case, it is hard for target audiences to separate fact from fiction.

There are three main types of rumours:

**1. Reports of events and/or risky behaviours** such as “people in X province are experiencing bad coughs when they sleep under the new type of ITN. The new ITN is making people sick. We’ll refuse to use them” or “we are in the middle of a pandemic and the government is making everyone stay home but people are still distributing ITNs and spreading the disease to households”.

**2. Misunderstood or incomplete information (misinformation)** that is spread without ill intent but that may lead to the practice of risky behaviours or negative perceptions. For example, “people are getting coughing sickness when sleeping under this new type of ITN, so we should wash it well with bleach and dry it in the sun to remove the insecticide before using it” or “these ITNs attract bedbugs in our households, we should stop using them if we want to stop getting bedbugs”.

**3. Disinformation or false information** that is spread with intent to cause harm or take advantage of a situation. For example, “the government is providing the good ITNs only to their supporters. The rest of us are only getting the sub-standard ITNs that don’t work. We should all refuse these ITNs”.

Based on experience over multiple ITN campaigns, outbreaks of the Ebola Virus Disease (EBV) and the distribution of ITNs during the global COVID-19 pandemic, a number of lessons have been learned on how to manage rumours. These include:

- Protect healthcare workers, particularly “last mile” workers who are directly interacting with households and community members and whose security may be compromised in the case of rumours.
- Give training to healthcare workers, including those involved in continuous distribution channels, on (1) what to do and who to contact if they discover rumours during their work and (2) how to mitigate the risks of threats to their safety when working in an insecure environment or what to do if they feel threatened while working.
- Push back against rumours with frequent, fact-based communication through appropriate channels.

- Engage the local community early and continuously during planning and implementation of activities related to the ITN distribution.
- Use faith-based and trusted community networks to provide accurate information and build on the trust that people have developed over time.
- Make sure that the rumour management plan is finalized and adopted well before the start of a mass distribution campaign or use of a new continuous distribution channel and that funding is available for its implementation if and when needed.
- Ensure that the rumour management plan is a living document and updated on a regular basis to keep abreast of the current situation and changes in the operating context.

While managing rumours is usually very context specific (such as in the case of a health emergency, natural disaster, political motivation, cultural norms or in conflict settings), there are some key steps that can be followed in the development of a rumour management plan (RMP). The rumour management plan template (Annex 1: the Template) can help national malaria programmes and their partners to develop a robust plan.

# DEVELOPING A RUMOUR MANAGEMENT PLAN: IDENTIFY POTENTIAL RUMOURS

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It is better to prevent rumours than to react to and manage them (i.e. mitigating the risk of rumours occurring in the first place, rather than mitigating the “impact” of rumours if they do occur). Managing rumours reactively takes time, energy and resources that are typically already allocated elsewhere and often comes after some damage has already been done. To mitigate the risk of rumours, it is important to firstly identify potential areas of concern that could lead to the creation of rumours. Some can be generic to most contexts, such as rumours that the insecticide on the net is harmful to health. Others can be context specific, such as one net type being better than others in a multi-product campaign or politicizing of the campaign in an election year.

The first step is to identify potential rumours. Using Table 1, Section 1 of the Template, national malaria programmes and their partners can identify:

1. Potential rumours
2. The possible source(s) of these rumours
3. The potential impact should these rumours start and spread

It is important to be aware of the context and any circumstance that could possibly give rise to rumours. Examples include federal or local elections, health emergencies such as EVD or the COVID-19 pandemic, areas with political, social or economic tensions, etc. National malaria programmes should undertake a contextual analysis of the period in which the ITN distribution activities will take place to map out any other planned events or activities taking place at or near the same time. Where possible, mitigation of rumours could involve postponing ITN distribution activities, for example in the case of elections (avoiding pre, during and post-election periods when tensions may flare). In other cases, mitigation may not be possible as unplanned events may occur.

Early planning to anticipate possible rumours in the local context must be done, a mitigation plan put in place and a response plan developed and costed to be ready for immediate roll-out once rumours that require a response are discovered. While rumour management plans are generally developed centrally as part of macroplanning, it is critical that the microplanning phase includes time for identification of context-specific rumours at sub-national levels so that these can be included in the localized plans, SBC messages and budgets.

The rumour management plan and the response mechanism put in place must take into account potential gender barriers to information access, as well as specific groups (such as nomads or internally displaced people) that may not be reached by mainstream communication channels. It is important to ensure that all target groups have access to accurate information, and the rumour management plan must therefore identify how women, elderly, disabled people and minority groups obtain their information.

All risks related to ITN distribution activities, including the potential for rumours, should be included in the ITN distribution risk assessment and mitigation plan, which should be used as the basis for development of a short, detailed rumour management plan<sup>2</sup>.

**Table 1 (section 1): Potential rumours, source and impact**

Rumour/mis- or disinformation	Source of rumour	Potential impact from the spread of the rumour
The mosquito nets being distributed are bad for your health.	A result of occasional side reactions that have been reported by ITN users including headache, common cold symptoms, skin irritation, burning sensation in the eyes and nausea.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Rejection of nets by the community</li> <li>● Low use of nets received</li> <li>● Lack of trust in government-supplied commodities</li> </ul>

2. See AMP toolkit, Chapter 5, Brief 3: Risk mitigation planning. [https://allianceformalariaprevention.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/AMP-Toolkit-report-2015\\_Chapter5\\_EN\\_LR-1.pdf](https://allianceformalariaprevention.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/AMP-Toolkit-report-2015_Chapter5_EN_LR-1.pdf)

# MITIGATING THE RISKS OF RUMOURS

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Using Table 1 of the Template, national malaria programmes and partners should now brainstorm on the mitigating measures they should be putting in place for each of the issues that they have identified in the first section of Table 1. When thinking about mitigating measures, there are some key steps that national malaria programmes and their partners can take to reduce the risk of rumours arising. These include:

- **Ensure clear and factual communication about ITNs:** In the case of a mass distribution campaign, the target population always needs to know key information about the campaign. This includes the objectives of the campaign and the purpose of the ITNs, who the key actors and stakeholders are, the process for receiving the ITNs, and what is expected of the household members (including how to correctly hang, use and care for their ITNs). Messages must be clear and concise so as not to “overload” households and create the risk of misunderstanding. For continuous distribution, clear and factual information needs to be disseminated to those managing the distribution process, so that they can in turn inform their target population of the facts of the distribution and use of ITNs in general.
- **Use effective communication channels to reach everyone:** It is important that all target populations get the same information, even if the level of “detail” in the information might be slightly different. This will mean ensuring that messages are disseminated using different communication channels to maximize the number of households receiving the messages. Depending on the context, some communication channels might be prioritized over others in certain areas. For example, while television might be a good source of information in urban areas, many households in rural areas may not have access to a television. It is important to use available data to ensure that communication

channels are clearly reflected in macro and micro level SBC plans and budgets.

A strong multi-channel SBC strategy should help to ensure that clear, correct and actionable information is communicated. It is therefore important to ensure support and buy-in for the campaign strategy and action plan (key SBC activities, communication channels and messages) from all stakeholders, including the government. Rumour management plans must describe the channels that will be used, the key spokespeople that will be used at all levels because they are trusted figures and the draft key messages that can be quickly adapted to ensure that they address the specific information contained in the rumour. Generally, when rumour management plans are put into action, the people addressing the rumours should not be the same people who disseminated the discredited information in the first place.

- **Advocate with influential persons:** Politicians and other social influencers at all levels can help ensure political and social buy-in that reduces barriers to implementation. Advocacy sessions or meetings should encourage influential persons to act in ways that can influence the population’s perception of the distribution, potentially mitigating the risk of rumours. Examples include influential persons committing to sleeping under ITNs every night of the year, or different political parties being united

in promoting the same messages about the ITNs and the ITN distribution. This target group can also counter rumours with fact-based information that reaches a large audience quickly, should rumours arise.

- **Engage community level leaders and structures:** Leaders and structures that directly influence community members, including village and religious chiefs, women leaders, teachers, union leaders, etc. are critical in ensuring safe access to communities. Leaders lead by example: if community leaders are engaged to represent and advocate for the ITN distribution in their communities, it may increase acceptance of the distribution activities and, therefore, access to households. It is critical, however, to ensure that community leaders are representative of all targeted groups including groups that are often under-represented during ITN campaigns and other distribution channels such as women, ethnic minorities,

opposition groups, etc. These groups are affected as much as any other by malaria, need ITNs as a means of protection and can serve as advocates for other members of their communities. In addition, community leaders and influencers are integral members of their communities and are in a good position to hear of any possible rumours early.

Even with these mitigating measures in place, circumstances might still lead to rumours arising. In some circumstances (such as when rumours lead to the destruction of ITNs or put the lives of others in danger) it is critical to respond quickly to the rumour. While brainstorming on possible rumours and mitigating activities, it is also important to develop key messages that can be used to respond to the rumours should they occur. Section 2 of Table 1 in the Template can be used to list the mitigation measures and key messages.

Health education  
during ITN door-to-  
door distribution in  
Niger state in Nigeria





### HOW TO USE YOUR INSECTICIDE TREATED NET (ITN)

- 1. AIR YOUR NET: Hang your net in a well-ventilated area for at least 24 hours before use.
- 2. HANG YOUR NET: Hang your net over your sleeping area.
- 3. SLEEP INSIDE THE NET: Sleep inside the net and tuck it under your body.
- 4. ROLL UP YOUR NET: Roll up your net when you wake up.

### HOW TO CARE FOR YOUR INSECTICIDE TREATED NET (ITN)

- A. WASH YOUR NET: Wash your net with mild soap and water.
- B. DRY YOUR NET: Dry your net in the sun after washing.
- C. MEND YOUR NET: Mend any holes or tears immediately.

**YOUR NET IS VALUABLE BECAUSE IT PROTECTS YOU FROM MOSQUITOES THAT SPREAD MALARIA**



**FOR A MALARIA FREE NIGER STATE, YOUR PART BY SLEEPING INSIDE YOUR NET EVERY NIGHT**

**Table 1 (section 2): Mitigating activities and suggested key responses for potential rumours**

Rumour	Planned mitigating activities	Response: key messages if rumour occurs
<p>The mosquito nets being distributed are bad for your health.</p>	<p>Ensure that SBC messages being disseminated through the different channels include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How to correctly air and use the net. It is critical that these messages are disseminated before and during the ITN distribution.</li> <li>● Malaria is a dangerous disease. It is important for households to protect themselves and their community from malaria by sleeping under an insecticide-treated mosquito net.</li> </ul>	<p>If there are no changes in context, the following key messages can be disseminated to affected communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Malaria is a dangerous disease. It is important for households to protect themselves and their community from malaria by sleeping under an insecticide-treated mosquito net.</li> <li>● Before using the net, air it in the shade for 24 hours.</li> <li>● All the nets distributed during the campaign are approved by the World Health Organization and the Ministry of Health. They have been rigorously tested to ensure that they are safe to sleep under.</li> <li>● These nets are distributed in all malarious countries and can protect people against malaria when used correctly and consistently</li> <li>● The quality of the net can be sustained through appropriate care and repair behaviours by owners.</li> </ul>

# RESPONDING TO RUMOURS

The second part of a RMP should be about how to respond to rumours should they occur. Once rumours have started, there are three steps to effectively containing them<sup>3</sup> and the Template will help national malaria programmes and partners describe this process.



## STEP 1: Discovering the rumours

Broadly speaking, rumours are spread by a few routes

- **Word of mouth** within communities
- **News media** (print, radio, television, outdoor media and internet)
- **Digitally** through mobile phones and online platforms

**Reporting the rumour:** It is important to build on existing, trusted relationships with local people who have their ear to the ground to ensure that rumours are reported quickly (WhatsApp is a good tool for this). A toll-free hotline and/or website can be created

to report on the rumours and their sources (such as social media page, mobile phone number, WhatsApp number) and to answer questions through channels to which the targeted population has access<sup>4</sup>. Whichever channel(s) is/are used, it is important to ensure that local campaign stakeholders are able to report rumours upstream, i.e. there must be a “reporting structure” that is in place and that is explained to and understood by all campaign actors, for example during training sessions at all levels. Local campaign stakeholders should know who to call at higher levels and have access to a reporting structure that ensures easy and confidential communication for all. Local people should never fear reprisals for reporting the spread of rumours in their community. Therefore, ensuring confidentiality is critical.

Establishing a catalogue or annotated list of rumours is also a function of reporting those rumours. It is important that the RMP details who will be responsible for cataloguing rumours and where the catalogue will be stored to ensure confidentiality. Table 2 of the Template provides an example for national malaria programmes and partners of how to catalogue the rumours being identified and reported. It also facilitates analysis of the current impact and potential consequences of the rumours.

3. [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1v5NYyWt9HdDcNks2r28FE9K0ux0kr3n8gxW\\_GN8kci8/edit#](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1v5NYyWt9HdDcNks2r28FE9K0ux0kr3n8gxW_GN8kci8/edit#)

4. See also: [https://www.ready-initiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Tips\\_on\\_using\\_social\\_media\\_for\\_COVID-19\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.ready-initiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Tips_on_using_social_media_for_COVID-19_FINAL.pdf)

**What are the potential consequences of the rumour?**

When rumours have been identified, first assess the potential consequences of the rumour. It is important to remember that not all rumours are worth addressing. Where it was not a major issue in the first place, addressing a rumour might bring it into more prominence, thus creating a larger problem. Some of the reasons that rumours should be addressed include:

- Could cause harm to communities by preventing them from using ITNs: “ITNs are stored in warehouses with bedbugs, and the bedbugs are in the nets when they give them to us. If you use the nets, you will get bitten all night by bedbugs”.
- Could stop people accessing ITNs or lead people to refuse ITNs distributed door-to-door: “The community health workers distributing the ITNs will give you COVID-19”.
- Could cause conflict: “The insecticide on the ITN is part of a plot to make people infertile”.

- Could result in risky behaviour/putting staff, family or community at risk: “These ITNs are being distributed by Christians/Muslims as a way to make us convert to their religion”.
- Could put certain groups at risk: “Only pregnant women and children under five get sick from malaria”.
- Could pose a risk to an organization or group’s reputation and cause harm by preventing communities from using ITNs: “The government is giving the good nets to people that voted for them. The rest of us are getting the bad nets that don’t work”.

Note, however, that rumours can be a valuable analytic tool for discovering what the community or parts of it are thinking, what they do and do not understand, and what their attitudes are towards any interventions. Rumours may demonstrate where there is an information gap that needs filling. For example, a rumour that “Only pregnant women and children under five get sick from malaria” is a clear indication of a gap in knowledge on malaria and who is affected by malaria.



## STEP 2: Analysing the rumour

Depending on the extent of the rumours identified, it might be necessary to analyse the information being received about the rumours. The scope and scale of the analysis will vary depending on the extent of the rumours but must be done quickly to ensure a timely and effective response.

If just one rumour is localized to a single community, it is easier to speak directly to community leaders and resolve the issue quickly before it escalates. In a community in Nigeria, concerns were raised that the ITNs were being distributed only by people of a certain faith, and whether the ITN was designed to make community members “convert”. This was quickly addressed through a meeting with community and religious leaders to explain that the ITNs were being distributed to everyone in the state for the purposes of protecting households from malaria.

Rumours of a larger scale and scope might necessitate a more in-depth analysis. During the ITN mass distribution in 2021 in Liberia, rumours associating ITNs and the mass distribution with the COVID-19 pandemic began circulating during the ITN distribution activities. One of the main reasons why rumours were created was because the distribution coincided with the COVID-19 third wave experienced by the country, particularly the rural areas that had been largely “untouched” by the pandemic’s earlier waves. Information on rumours was being received from several counties, prompting the national malaria programme and partners to undertake a quick analysis to better understand the scope and scale of the rumours, and thereby better develop a response (if needed). The following tool was used to implement a rapid analysis (a generic version of this tool is available as part of the Template):

**Liberia ITN mass distribution campaign 2021**  
**Assessing scale and scope of rumors regarding ITNs and COVID-19**

**Objective:** This table is designed to help the NMCP, County Health Teams and their partners to quickly assess the scope and scale of the rumors affecting ITN access and use. The results of this rapid assessment will help the NMCP and its partners in developing a strategy and associated activities, tools and materials to respond to these rumours.

**County:**  
**Report submission date:**  
**Name of Person Reporting:**  
**Service Providers Overseeing Distribution:**

RUMOR TRACKING			
<b>What is the rumor/s that you have identified regarding ITNs?</b>	<b>What is the extent of the rumour?</b> E.g. It is limited to 1 or 2 communities only. 1 or 2 districts only. More than 50% of the districts? List the districts, zones, and/or communities below.	<b>What is the result of the rumor?</b> E.g. People not accepting nets. People burning nets...	<b>How is the rumor affecting ITN distribution?</b> E.g. People not accepting nets. People burning nets...

COMMUNICATION CHANNELS			
<b>List all ITN completed campaign communication activities.</b>	<b>List all pending ITN campaign communication activities.</b>	<b>What are the existing communication channels that are strong in the affected areas? E.g. Radio, community leaders, CHWs</b>	<b>List the names and responsibilities of all focal/influential persons support the ITN distribution in the county.</b>

The rapid analysis showed that several communities/households were refusing to collect their nets, were misusing their nets, and on some occasions were destroying their nets, necessitating an immediate response to the rumours.

To allow a quick response to be implemented, Table 1 of the RMP lists potential rumours, a detailed analysis of their potential impact, as well as potential responses to correct the

rumour if it should occur. This is designed to allow the rumour to be addressed before it has a chance to become widespread and difficult to manage.

Table 2 below shows an analysis of some actual mis/disinformation and rumours and sources of rumours specific to ITN mass distribution campaigns.

**Table 2: Risks/rumours identified**

Rumour/ misinformation/ disinformation	Causes of rumour	Impact / potential impact from the spread of the rumour
<p><b>The chemical in the net is toxic and bad for our health. You need to wash the net before using it.</b></p>	<p>An error on the ITN package which stated that ITNs needed to be washed before they are used, caused households to believe that the insecticide in the ITN was harmful to their health.</p> <p><i>These types of health-related rumours can also occur if for example, households receiving ITNs impregnated with deltamethrin report increases in coughing when sleeping under the new ITNs</i></p> <p><i>Rumours can also occur where new or different ITN types (e.g. PBO vs. standard long-lasting insecticide-treated nets [LLIN] or polyethylene vs. polyester) are being distributed in different geographical areas.</i></p>	<p>The result was that many households washed their ITNs before using them, thus reducing the effectiveness of the ITN. Other households refused to collect or use the ITNs as they believed they were detrimental to their health.</p>

Rumour/ misinformation/ disinformation	Causes of rumour	Impact / potential impact from the spread of the rumour
<p><b>Accepting/using ITNs that the government is distributing can give you COVID-19</b></p>	<p>An increase in COVID-19 cases at the same time as the ITNs were being distributed to communities in Liberia in 2021 led to the creation of these rumours. This was made worse by misunderstandings about COVID-19 transmission and prevention, people handling and exchanging goods and/or insufficient information provided in advance of ITN distribution to explain COVID-19 transmission reduction measures put in place by the Ministry of Health.</p>	<p>Because of these rumours, households and communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Did not collect their ITNs from distribution points following registration</li> <li>● Misused their ITNs for purposes other than for protection against malaria</li> <li>● Burnt their ITNs as they perceived their ITNs to be carriers of COVID-19</li> <li>● Left their ITNs to hang in the rain and sun, because they believed that it would kill the COVID-19 virus that may be in the ITN</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Ministry of Health (MoH) placed COVID-19 virus in the nets to have an increase in the number of COVID-19 cases in the country</b></p>	<p><i>These rumours can also occur where there is any epidemic or serious outbreak of disease (e.g. EVD) following the distribution when people begin to use their new ITNs. A perception is that the disease is related to ITN distribution or use, affecting positive ITN behaviours built over the past decade and potentially reducing their use.</i></p>	
<p><b>Community Health Workers (CHWs) or other campaign workers distributing ITNs are carriers of the COVID-19 virus and anything they have touched should not be accepted.</b></p>		
<p><b>The mosquito nets are full of bedbugs. If you bring the mosquito nets into your home, you will get bedbugs.</b></p>	<p>Several households noticed the presence of bedbugs when receiving ITNs. This was because the pyrethroid in the ITNs made the bedbugs that were already present, more "active" while not killing them. In addition, the seams of the ITNs are an ideal sleeping area for the bedbugs as they provide material on the front and back of the insect.</p>	<p>Several households refused to collect their ITNs from fixed distribution points. Other households used their ITNs for purposes other than sleeping, while others destroyed their ITNs, often through burning.</p>
<p><b>The mosquito nets are being distributed by Christians. If you use the net you will also become Christian.</b></p>	<p>There was a perception from a community that the campaign was exclusively Christian because the implementing partner was a faith-based organization and this was reflected in their logo.</p>	<p>The community did not want to utilize the nets that they had just received. They indicated their intention to return their nets to the health educator who was able to address the issue.</p>

For all these rumours, there is a possibility that malaria cases increase due to households losing trust and not accessing ITNs or not using ITNs available in households.

It is important to assess the content of the rumour against the current context as this will support the response. For example, the rumours identified in Liberia occurred at the same time as the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic and it is not inconceivable that communities would make a link between the campaign and the disease. Also, several countries have experienced rumours that ITNs bring bedbugs into the household. While the ITNs were not distributed with bedbugs, the seams in the mosquito nets are a good place for bedbugs to sleep as they provide cover for the front and back of the bedbug. Therefore, any bedbugs living in the sleeping area may be attracted to live in the ITN.

If an analysis of the rumour(s) is needed to develop a response, there is a risk that it might spread in scale and scope before it can be properly addressed. In such a scenario, it is critical to ensure that correct campaign information is still being disseminated to communities until the response is formulated. During the analysis stage of the rumours, the national malaria programme in Liberia and partners continued to implement planned SBC activities disseminating key messages about the benefits of ITNs and how the campaign actors were reducing the risk of COVID-19 transmission during activities.

It is important to remember that rumours can sometimes be partly true or even fully true. Where rumours are partly true or completely true, efforts should be made to correct any information that is not true and contex-

tualize the information that is true. Examples include:

- A rumour that door-to-door distribution of ITNs may lead to spread of an infectious or contagious disease is true, but the response to the rumour may be to reinforce the measures taken to limit the potential spread of the disease during the ITN distribution, including explaining why the distributors are wearing masks and maintaining physical distancing with household members.
- A rumour that the ITN has bedbugs in it might be true, and a response should focus on providing facts to households (e.g. the ITN was not distributed with the bedbugs in it) coupled with the need to reinforce health and hygiene measures to prevent bedbugs within the household.

If it is easy to identify the source of the rumour, it may be possible to persuade the same source that the rumour is incorrect and that they should rectify the information. However, recent experience shows that identifying the source of the rumour takes time, especially in a scenario where rumours are started at the community level and spread quickly. Given the extent to which rumours can have a negative effect on ITN access and use, it is more important to address and correct the rumour quickly than to identify its source. As needed, a retrospective analysis can be done at the end of the ITN distribution to better understand the rumours and their sources to ensure these elements are considered in future planning.



### **STEP 3: Correcting the rumours**

Once a rumour has been identified and fact-checked, it is important to address and correct it (if necessary) with accurate information. It is critical to keep in mind that any messages passed through any channel to address a rumour must target the specific information in the rumour and not be generic.

Rumours can spread quickly in the absence of frequent, accurate information. It is necessary to:

- Communicate quickly
- Be transparent
- Address the concerns raised in the rumour directly
- Provide accurate information on what is being done
- Stay consistent with messages
- Remind the community that they are part of the solution

In addressing the rumour, do not forget to:

- Clearly identify the key audience that needs to be influenced
- Ensure that women and vulnerable groups such as ethnic minorities are reached with accurate information
- Use language, sources and testimonials with which the target audience is comfortable and finds credible, based on pre-tested materials in terms of images, language, etc. Pre-testing should have been done when the SBC materials and messages were initially developed and not when rumours arise
- Match the channel chosen to the audience
- Use local partner networks to disseminate accurate information, especially community-based partners and community and faith-based leaders
- Amplify the message using influencers and spokespeople
- Check if new content is being received, understood and believed either through CHWs, community leaders or other trusted sources of information

## Communication channels

When developing the original communication strategies and SBC Plan of Action, national malaria programmes will have identified the most effective communication channels and their reach (national, provincial, local) for the various target groups, including those that may not be reached by the major channels. For example, in some rural areas CHWs and health facilities might be the primary source of information for women, whereas in urban and peri-urban areas, the national radio station and social media might be where most of the population accesses information.

Communication channels used to correct and manage rumours should consider the current context and be adapted accordingly. As much as possible they should not further “spread” or “expose” people to the rumour. If the rumour is still localized, then local radio or interpersonal communication (IPC) might be the best method to quell the rumours. Communication channels can include:

- Town criers<sup>5</sup> and/or motorized town announcers<sup>6</sup>, CHWs (or even CHWs with motorbikes) that are only circulating the response in the affected areas. Make sure that town announcers, CHWs or motorized personnel have the right equipment (megaphones, loudspeakers and spare batteries) and job aids with clear information on the messages that need to be disseminated.

- Community leaders are trusted individuals in communities and, during particularly stressful periods, such as around elections, will be a go-to source for households for advice. Because community leaders are often the first responders when their community faces a threat, they should be engaged before campaign implementation and their roles and responsibilities clearly defined and agreed. They should be trained or orientated to ensure that they have the added capacity and provided with tools and resources to respond to rumours if they should arise<sup>7</sup>. In South Sudan, community leaders were key in not only disseminating information to communities, but in quelling rumours that use of ITNs would transmit COVID-19 to the user.
- Community-level campaign personnel and health facility staff (often already engaged in the ITN campaign) are a trusted source of information for community members when it comes to their health. In Liberia, community-level staff at the MoH and implementing partners were able to respond quickly to community concerns regarding COVID-19 and the ITNs. Ensuring that community-level staff members are trained in rumour management can facilitate the process of identifying, analysing and responding to rumours to mitigate their impact.

5. See AMP guidance: *Standard operating procedures for town criers during a mass insecticide-treated net distribution campaign*. [https://allianceformalariaprevention.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/SOPs\\_Town\\_Criers\\_ITN\\_campaign\\_COVID\\_EN.pdf](https://allianceformalariaprevention.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/SOPs_Town_Criers_ITN_campaign_COVID_EN.pdf)

6. Motorized town announcements involve the use of any motorized vehicle (motorbike, pickup truck, van, etc.) to disseminate campaign information to communities via pre-recorded or live messages on a PA system. See AMP guidance: *Standard operating procedures for motorized street announcers during a mass insecticide-treated net campaign*. [https://allianceformalariaprevention.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/SOP\\_Motorized\\_Street\\_Announcers\\_ITN\\_campaign\\_COVID\\_ENG.pdf](https://allianceformalariaprevention.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/SOP_Motorized_Street_Announcers_ITN_campaign_COVID_ENG.pdf)

7. See also AMP guidance: *Engagement of community leaders in ITN campaigns in the context of COVID-19 transmission*. <https://allianceformalariaprevention.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Engagement-of-community-leaders-EN.pdf>. Note that this guidance is relevant even when COVID-19 is not an issue.

- Community visits by CHWs or other local volunteers that are known and trusted by the community members (for example, volunteers from National Red Cross or Red Crescent Societies that are implementing community-based activities).

Employ communication channels that reach women and vulnerable groups (such as ethnic minorities), as these groups may not receive their information through popular media channels and may be left out of the community information network (such as community dialogue and door-to-door IPC).

**NOTE:** Before considering town announcers/motorized street announcers or community visits by CHWs, it will be necessary to assess whether the content of the rumour and its management pose risks in terms of physical security. For example, if the rumour is that ITN campaign staff are distributing good quality nets to pro-government households and that others are receiving substandard nets, the safety and security of town announcers/motorized street announcers/CHWs may be compromised, and mass and mid-media messages may be a better option.

The following table (Table 3), which features in the Template, can help national malaria programmes plan which communication channels to use based on the geographical extent of the rumour once it has been identified and reported. When developing the RMP, it is important for the national malaria programme to plan for communication channels based on their context and experience. This might vary between regions and/or target groups and should be explained accordingly in the RMP. As an example, the security situation in northern Cameroon means that town criers (especially male town criers) could become victims of forced recruitment into non-state armed groups. Therefore, while town criers might be an effective communication channel in the rest of Cameroon, mass media might be a better option to respond to rumours in the north of the country.

**Table 3: Identification of geographical extent of rumours and appropriate communication channels for mitigation**

Geographical extent	Communication channels	Rationale
<p><b>Localized to one or very few communities</b></p>	<p>Use trained<sup>8</sup> religious, traditional/ community leaders<sup>9</sup>, CHWs and health facility staff to disseminate information to households via community visits using megaphones</p> <p>Community radio and town criers/ motorized street announcers</p>	<p>The rumour is still contained and can be managed through limited IPC. Influential leaders or trusted members of the community have demonstrated that they can quell the rumour before it spreads further.</p> <p>Individuals that are trusted within the community will be the best sources to dispel the information in the rumour.</p> <p>Limit the risk of spreading the rumour outside the affected areas by using communication channels that are focused and targeted to the area where the rumour is spreading.</p>
<p><b>Rumour extends to several communities</b></p>	<p>Use trained religious, traditional/ community leaders, CHWs and health facility staff to disseminate information to households via community visits using megaphones</p> <p>Community or district level radio, town criers and motorized street announcers/CHWs with megaphones</p>	<p>The rumour is still relatively contained and can be managed through IPC and community/ district media channels.</p> <p>Limit the risk of spreading the rumour outside the affected areas by using communication channels that are focused and targeted to the area where the rumour is spreading.</p>
<p><b>Rumour extends to most (or all) of a district</b></p>	<p>Use all district and community-level channels to try to address the rumour, including radio and TV, social media (where this has previously been identified as an effective communication channel), town criers/ motorized street announcers (safety permitting), religious and traditional/ community leaders and other people with influence on people's thinking and beliefs.</p>	<p>Rumour is no longer localized to a few communities. While IPC will still be effective in some communities, it is necessary to extend the reach of messages through use of broader channels.</p> <p>There is a risk that the rumour spreads from the district to the whole country. It is therefore important to start using mass and mid-media to disseminate information.</p>

8. Simple job aids with one-page instructions and one-page key messages should be provided.

9. See AMP guidance: Engagement of community leaders in ITN campaigns in the context of COVID-19 transmission. <https://allianceformalariaprevention.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Engagement-of-community-leaders-EN.pdf>. Note that the information is relevant even when COVID is not an issue.

Geographical extent	Communication channels	Rationale
<p><b>Rumour is circulating at a national level and affects all communities</b></p>	<p>Use as many available communication channels as possible, as described in the SBC Plan of Action (PoA)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Use all available local and national radio stations for airing of short messages and radio debates/talk back/call-in shows</li> <li>2. Use TV spots and TV discussion programmes</li> <li>3. Use social media (where this has previously been identified as an effective communication channel)</li> <li>4. Use town criers/motorized town announcers/CHWs with megaphones</li> </ol>	<p>If the rumour has spread to the national level, then the response needs to reach the whole population. The SBC PoA and the risk assessment and mitigation plan, in addition to the rumour management plan, should already have identified and engaged some of the best communication channels for the country and should have already pre-tested materials and messages with different segments of the population using the most common dialects. The same channels should be used to disseminate new messages to respond to the rumour.</p>

Use various sources, such as community health workers, health facility staff, social media, etc. to monitor whether the rumour is being spread beyond the initial problem area and engage other radio stations and media channels to extend the reach of new messages as required. Social media monitoring and social media listening can help provide quantitative and qualitative information on the conversations circulating in communities, as well as the volume of these messages<sup>10</sup>.

10. [https://breakthroughactionandresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/BABR\\_SocLstng\\_Webinar\\_Eng.pdf](https://breakthroughactionandresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/BABR_SocLstng_Webinar_Eng.pdf)

## Formulating a response

- Rumours arising during the ITN distribution may require the national malaria programme to disseminate key messages that have been developed in anticipation of possible rumours (as in table 1 above) or to rapidly develop additional key messages where unforeseen rumours arise. Table 4 below has examples of key messages that can be used to respond to other rumours. There must be consistency in messaging across all channels. Information will need to be disseminated to communities quickly and efficiently to stop any rumours from spreading and leading to a potential suspension of activities for the ITN distribution where the safety and security of distributors and CHWs is compromised. While Table 4 provides examples of messages, these will need to be reviewed and adapted quickly as soon as the rumour is identified, the situation has been analysed and the specific risks associated with the rumour have been broken down, including decisions on whether the rumour is one that needs to be addressed. All responses and messages formulated must be based on facts and evidence that contradict the mis/disinformation in the rumour. Messages responding to the rumour must never lie to commu-

nities as this is unethical and may cause more harm than good when the message is found to be untrue. Messages developed to counter rumours must be communicated in the local language or dialect using words that communities will understand.

So that communities are not “confused” by conflicting information (i.e. the rumours being spread, and the new messages communicated to address them), the messages coming from the national malaria programme and disseminated using various channels and influential individuals should:

- State that there is incorrect or misleading information that is being circulated in the community/district/country
- Provide the correct information in simple language and back it up with evidence
- Assure communities of the benefits of the campaign and using ITNs for protection against malaria, particularly for pregnant women and children under five

**Table 4:** Sample messages for countering rumours

Rumour	Messages to counter rumour
<p><b>The government is only distributing the good ITNs to their supporters. The rest of us are getting substandard ITNs</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Mosquito nets are being distributed by the government free of charge. They are being distributed to everyone in the country/region/district.</li> <li>● The ITNs are being distributed to everyone to protect us from malaria.</li> <li>● All the ITNs being distributed have been approved by the World Health Organization and the Ministry of Health as safe to use and as an effective way to prevent mosquito bites and malaria.</li> <li>● Remember to air your ITN for 24 hours in the shade before using it for the first time.</li> <li>● Sleeping under an ITN every night can help protect you and your family from malaria.</li> </ul>
<p><b>CHWs or other campaign workers distributing ITNs are carriers of the COVID-19 virus and anything they have touched should not be accepted</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● All campaign workers/CHWs are doing a very important job to ensure that everyone is receiving ITNs to protect them from malaria. All of the workers have been trained in the best ways to minimize the spread of COVID-19 and will protect household members to the maximum extent possible. Please support these workers to ensure that you receive your ITNs and please respect the need to maintain at least one metre physical distance between you and the health workers.</li> <li>● ITNs will be handed over to households without physical contact (e.g. will be put on a table or on the ground in front of the household representative) whether the distribution is door-to-door or at fixed distribution points (adapt to country strategy).</li> <li>● All household representatives receiving ITNs are advised of the importance of washing their hands once they have taken the ITNs to their household, as well as the importance of hanging the ITNs in the shade for 24 hours before use. Note that this message is particularly important for deltamethrin-treated ITNs as studies have shown that these ITNs can provoke common cold-like symptoms and coughing in children and headaches/dizziness and cold symptoms in mothers<sup>11</sup>.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The mosquito nets are being distributed by Christians. If you use the net you will also become Christian.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Mosquito nets are being distributed by the government free of charge. They are being distributed to everyone in the country/region/district irrespective of their religion, race or gender.</li> <li>● The ITNs are being distributed to everyone to protect us from malaria.</li> <li>● Sleeping under an ITN every night of the year is one of the best ways to protect yourself and your family from malaria and to reduce cases of fever.</li> </ul>

11. Lu, G., Traoré, C., Meissner, P. *et al.* Safety of insecticide-treated mosquito nets for infants and their mothers: randomized controlled community trial in Burkina Faso. *Malar J* 14, 527 (2015). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12936-015-1068-6>.



## STEP 4: Monitoring the response

It is important to monitor the implementation of response activities, to ensure that they have indeed corrected or quelled the rumour. If monitoring activities show that the rumours are still ongoing, national malaria programmes and partners may want to consider:

- Increasing the dissemination of key messages
- Expanding the communication channels that are being used in the response to ensure that key messages are heard by a wider audience
- Reviewing the response strategy and making necessary adjustments

If monitoring shows that the mis/disinformation is expanding in scope and scale, then national malaria programmes and their partners should consider:

- Undertaking a rapid assessment to better understand the scope and scale of the rumours (even if a rapid assessment was previously done, it is a good idea to review the situation through a rapid analysis).
- Reviewing the response strategy and adapting accordingly based on more information from the rapid assessment. If the rumour is resulting in a very large number of households not collecting their ITNs, the response strategy might be to reduce the loss on investment by suspending activities (and avoiding unnecessary costs such as allowances for personnel who are unable to achieve their targets) until the concerns of the population have been addressed.
- Continuing to monitor the response.

# TRAINING COVERING THE RUMOUR MANAGEMENT PLAN

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The impact of rumours experienced in ITN campaigns (especially in 2020 and 2021) clearly demonstrates that a rumour management plan should not only be developed during the macroplanning stage of the campaign, but that it should also be adopted at all levels. Adoption of the rumour management plan means that it should become part of the structure and process of the ITN campaign. It is therefore critical for all campaign workers (at all levels) to be aware of the rumour management plan, and to be trained on carrying out their role and responsibilities in identifying, communicating about and managing rumours. While the depth of knowledge regarding the rumour management plan might differ between the different levels, the following is information that all campaign staff should be aware of:

- The risks of rumours around ITN mass campaigns
- The potential impact of these rumours on the campaign (including ITN access and use, safety and security of campaign actors)
- The need to report any rumours without fear of reprisal
- The measures that have been put in place to maintain confidentiality
- How, when and to whom rumours should be reported

The details of the rumour management plan can be disseminated to campaign stakeholders through working meetings and trainings. Given that managing rumours is a process, it is recommended that the dissemination of the plan is done through a working session and focuses on practical examples. It is recommended that the rumour management plan becomes part of the training agenda for all ITN campaign personnel.

# **ANNEX 1 : Rumour management plan template for insecticide-treated net (ITN) distribution**

An adaptable Microsoft Word version of this template is available [here](#).

This template outlines the key items to include in a rumour management plan for ITN distribution. For the purposes of this document, “ITN distribution” refers to any programme or project that distributes nets for malaria prevention to population groups and can include ITN mass distribution campaigns, continuous distribution through schools or community, or routine-based distribution through antenatal care (ANC) or Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) visits. The rumour management plan (RMP) is an integral part of the Social and Behaviour Change (SBC) Plan of Action, and as such must be completed as part of macro level planning. Like the risk and mitigation plan, mis/disinformation and rumours are constantly evolving and the RMP needs to be a living document and updated as and when needed. This template provides suggestions for the content and structure of an RMP. Contexts will vary, and national malaria programmes should include information that is related to their particular situation and replace the suggested text with their own narrative.

## **TABLE OF CONTENT**

- Introduction and context
- Purpose of the rumour management plan (RMP)
- Potential rumours and rumour mitigation measures
- Coordination
- Rumour management process
- Adoption and dissemination of the RMP

## Introduction and context

In two or three paragraphs explain:

- What are rumours (include a definition of mis- and disinformation)?
- What are the risks associated with rumours in ITN campaigns and during continuous distribution?
- The specific context for the planned mass distribution campaign or for the continuous distribution channel(s) that might influence potential rumours. Examples can include federal or local elections, multi-product campaigns, distribution of nets with a non-preferred textile or colour, disease outbreak, etc.

## Purpose of the rumour management plan

In one or two paragraphs explain:

- The main purpose of the RMP
- The main components of the RMP
- Past experiences with rumours and lessons learned that will be implemented in this RMP (this can be put in a table format)

## Potential rumours and rumour mitigating measures

In table format, list potential rumours, their source(s) and the potential impact if they should spread. Responding to a rumour takes time, energy and resources. It is better to prevent the rumour from happening rather than developing and implementing a response. For each of the rumours identified, explain what mitigating measures have been planned to reduce or eliminate the risk of the rumour happening, or the impact that the rumour may have on the ITN distribution outcomes. See Table 1 for an example.

Despite the mitigating measures, there is still a risk that the rumours occur and may require an immediate response to reduce any negative effects. To allow a quick response in the case of rumours, list the key messages that can be used to counter the different potential rumours identified. It is important to note that during implementation, circumstances and context will change. Planned counter messages must be reviewed at the time that rumours occur to see whether they are still appropriate.

**Table 1: Potential rumours (source, potential impact, mitigating measures and key response messages) - sample**

Rumour/mis- or disinformation	Source of rumour	Potential impact from the spread of the rumour	Planned mitigating activities	Response: key messages if rumour occurs
<p>Poor quality of the nets being distributed</p>	<p>A result of occasional side reactions that have been reported by ITN users including headache, common cold symptoms, skin irritation, burning sensation in the eyes and nausea.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Rejection of nets by the community</li> <li>● Low use of nets received</li> <li>● Lack of trust in government-supplied commodities</li> </ul>	<p>Ensure that SBC messages being disseminated through the different channels include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How to correctly air and use the net. It is critical that these messages are disseminated before and during the ITN distribution.</li> <li>● Malaria is a dangerous disease. It is important for households to protect themselves and their community from malaria by always sleeping under an insecticide-treated mosquito net.</li> </ul>	<p>If there are no changes in context, the following key messages can be disseminated to affected communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Malaria is a dangerous disease. It is important for households to protect themselves and their community from malaria by always sleeping under an insecticide-treated mosquito net.</li> <li>● Before using the net, air it in the shade for 24 hours.</li> <li>● All the nets distributed during the campaign are approved by the World Health Organization and the Ministry of Health. They have been rigorously tested to ensure that they are safe to sleep under.</li> <li>● These nets are distributed in all malarious countries and can protect people against malaria when used correctly and consistently.</li> <li>● The quality of the net can be sustained through appropriate care and repair behaviours by owners.</li> </ul>

## Coordination

Explain the coordination structure for the management of rumours. The narrative should explain the roles and responsibilities of all actors at each level (i.e. community to national) in the rumour management structure.

## Rumour management process

This section should explain the process for the management of rumours. Rumour management typically has four major steps (as explained in the guidance for developing a rumour management plan).



**Step 1: Discovering the rumours:** Explain in detail the process and structure that have been put in place to identify any rumours and report these to the national level. An example can be advocacy sessions with community leaders on rumours.

Describe the tools that will be used to report any rumours from one level to the next and how these will be documented. Annex any tools that have been developed for this process. Table 2 below is an example of a tool on how rumours can be catalogued.

**Table 2: Cataloguing identified rumours - sample**

Rumour/ misinformation/ disinformation	Causes of rumour	Impact / potential impact from the spread of the rumour
<p><b>The chemical in the net is toxic and bad for our health. You need to wash the net before using it.</b></p>	<p>An error on the ITN package which stated that ITNs needed to be washed before they are used, caused households to believe that the insecticide in the ITN was harmful to their health.</p> <p><i>These types of health-related rumours can also occur if for example, households receiving ITNs impregnated with deltamethrin report increases in coughing when sleeping under the new ITNs</i></p> <p><i>Rumours can also occur where new or different ITN types (e.g. PBO vs. standard long-lasting insecticide-treated nets [LLIN] or polyethylene vs. polyester) are being distributed in different geographical areas</i></p>	<p>The result was that many households washed their ITNs before using them, thus reducing the insecticide and therefore the effectiveness of the ITN. Other households refused to collect or use the ITNs as they believed they were detrimental to their health.</p>



**Step 2: Analysing the rumour:** Describe how any identified rumours will be analysed to assess scope and scale, and how this will inform the response. Explain the different scales that will be used to inform the response (e.g. rumour is localized to only two communities), the tools that will be used (these tools should be annexed to the RMP), and those responsible for conducting the analysis. Figure 1 is an example of a tool that can be used to undertake a rapid analysis of the mis/disinformation or rumour if the scope and scale are currently unknown.

*Figure 1: Rapid assessment tool for rumour management for an ITN campaign*

**ITN distribution campaign**  
**Rapid assessment of scale and scope of rumours**

**Objective:** This table is designed to help national malaria programmes, regional and district health teams and their partners to quickly assess the scope and scale of the rumours affecting ITN access and use, or the general activities of the campaign. The results of this rapid assessment will help national malaria programmes and partners in refining the rumour management plan and associated activities, tools and materials to respond to these rumours.

<b>Name of region/district</b>	
<b>Submission date</b>	
<b>Name of person reporting</b>	
<b>Name of service providers overseeing distribution</b>	

### RUMOUR TRACKING

What is/are the rumour/s that you have identified regarding ITNs?	What is the <b>extent</b> of the rumour(s)? E.g. (i) limited to one or two communities only (ii) One or two districts only (iii) More than 50 per cent of the communities  <i>List the affected communities below.</i>	What is the <b>result</b> of the rumour? E.g. People not trusting that the ITNs are effective	How is the rumour affecting ITN distribution? E.g. people not accepting nets. People burning nets. People with vouchers now refusing to come to collect their nets	What activities, if any, have already been carried out to counter the rumours? What messages were used? What channels were used?

### COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

List all <b>completed</b> campaign SBC activities	List all <b>pending ITN campaign SBC activities</b> (these can be used to respond to the rumour)	What are the <b>existing communication channels</b> that are strong and effective in the affected areas? E.g. radio, community leaders, CHWs	List the names and responsibilities of all <b>focal/influential persons</b> who support the ITN distribution in the region/district



**Step 3: Correcting the rumours (response):** Describe the process and steps for responding to the mis/disinformation and rumours based on the analysis above. Explain how pre-developed messages (as shown in table 1) will be validated or how new messages will be developed to respond to the rumours. The description should detail who will be involved in formulating the messages, when they will meet, and how they will then ensure that these messages are disseminated to respond to the rumours. Using table 3 below, explain which communication channels will be used and why it has been decided to use a specific channel for each mitigating action.

**Table 3: Identification of geographical extent of rumours and appropriate communication channels for mitigation: sample**

Geographical extent	Communication channels	Rationale
Localized to one or very few communities	<p>Use trained<sup>12</sup> religious, traditional/ community leaders<sup>13</sup>, CHWs and health facility staff to disseminate information to households via community visits using megaphones.</p> <p>Community radio and town criers/ motorized street announcers</p>	<p>The rumour is still contained and can be managed through limited IPC. Influential leaders or trusted members of the community have demonstrated that they can quell the rumour before it spreads further.</p> <p>Individuals that are trusted within the community will be the best sources to dispel the information in the rumour.</p> <p>Limit the risk of spreading the rumour outside the affected areas by using communication channels that are focused and targeted to the area where the rumour is spreading.</p>
Rumour extends to several communities	<p>Use trained religious, traditional/ community leaders, CHWs and health facility staff to disseminate information to households via community visits using megaphones.</p> <p>Community or district level radio, town criers and motorized street announcers/CHWs with megaphones.</p>	<p>The rumour is still relatively contained and can be managed through IPC and community/ district media channels.</p> <p>Limit the risk of spreading the rumour outside the affected areas by using communication channels that are focused and targeted to the area where the rumour is spreading.</p>

12. Simple job aids with one-page instructions and one-page key messages should be provided

13. See AMP guidance: *Engagement of community leaders in ITN campaigns in the context of COVID-19 transmission*. <https://allianceformalariaprevention.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Engagement-of-community-leaders-EN.pdf>. Note that the information is relevant even when COVID is not an issue.

Geographical extent	Communication channels	Rationale
<p><b>Rumour extends to most (or all) of a district</b></p>	<p>Use all district and community-level channels to try to address the rumour, including radio and TV, social media (where this has previously been identified as an effective communication channel), town criers/motorized street announcers (safety permitting), religious and traditional/community leaders and other people with influence on people's thinking and beliefs.</p>	<p>Rumour is no longer localized to a few communities. While IPC will still be effective in some communities, it is necessary to extend the reach of messages through use of broader channels.</p> <p>There is a risk that the rumour spreads from the district to the whole country. It is therefore important to start using mass and mid-media to disseminate information.</p>
<p><b>Rumour is circulating at a national level and affects all communities</b></p>	<p>Use as many available communication channels as possible, as described in the SBC Plan of Action (PoA)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Use all available local and national radio stations for airing of short messages and radio debates/talk back/call-in shows</li> <li>6. Use TV spots and TV discussion programmes</li> <li>7. Use social media (where this has previously been identified as an effective communication channel)</li> <li>8. Use town criers/motorized town announcers/CHWs with megaphones</li> </ol>	<p>If the rumour has spread to the national level, then the response needs to reach the whole population. The SBC PoA and the risk assessment and mitigation plan, in addition to the rumour management plan, should have identified and engaged some of the best communication channels for the country and should have already pre-tested materials and messages with different segments of the population using the most common dialects. The same channels should be used to disseminate new messages to respond to the rumour.</p>

The following table can be part of the rumour management plan and be used when drafting key messages that will be used to respond to identified rumours.

**Table 4: Messages for countering rumours**

Rumour (sample)	Messages to counter rumour (samples)
<p><b>The government is only distributing the good ITNs to their supporters. The rest of us are getting substandard ITNs</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Mosquito nets are being distributed by the government free of charge. They are being distributed to everyone in the country/region/district.</li> <li>● The ITNs are being distributed to everyone to protect us from malaria.</li> <li>● All the ITNs being distributed have been approved by the World Health Organization and the Ministry of Health as safe to use and as an effective way to prevent mosquito bites and malaria.</li> <li>● Remember to air your ITN for 24 hours in the shade before using it for the first time.</li> <li>● Sleeping under an ITN every night can help protect you and your family from malaria.</li> </ul>



**Step 4: Monitoring the response:** Explain the process for monitoring of the response to ensure that any rumours have been quelled. Describe what the process will be if it is discovered that the initial response did not stop the spread of the rumour.

**Adoption and dissemination of the RMP**

In one or two paragraphs, describe how (and who) is responsible for approving the RMP, how the contents of the RMP will be disseminated to all stakeholders and how workers will be trained. Explain how amendments and updates to the RMP made on a continuous basis are communicated to stakeholders.





## AMP CONTACTS

To join the weekly AMP conference call each Wednesday at 10:00 AM Eastern time (16.00 PM CET) use the following Zoom meeting line:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/2367777867?pwd=allhZk9KQmcxMXNaWnRaN1JCUTQ3dz09>

You can find your local number to join the weekly call:

<https://zoom.us/u/acyOjkIj4>

To be added to the AMP mailing list visit:

<https://allianceformalariaprevention.com/weekly-conference-call/signup-for-our-mailing-list/>

To contact AMP or join an AMP working group please e-mail:

[allianceformalariaprevention@gmail.com](mailto:allianceformalariaprevention@gmail.com)

For further information please go to the AMP website:

<https://allianceformalariaprevention.com>