ESSN
RUMOUR TRACKING & MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Report Volume 1: April - October 2020

ABOUT RUMOUR TRACKING REPORT

This report captures questions and feedback about the rumours with regards to the Emergency Social Safety Net project funded by European Union Humanitarian Aid and implemented by Turkish Red Crescent (TRC) and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). Information has been gathered from eligible and ineligible populations, which will create better understanding of the information gaps, needs and rumours and ultimately, help to address them before they can do any harm.

WHAT IS A "RUMOUR"?

A rumour is defined as an unverified piece of 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.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF RUMOURS

Rumours are a natural response to uncertain or threatening times. They can help people make sense of a situation or act against a threat. They can broadly be categorized into three types:

- **Wish rumours:** These reflect the hopes of the community.
- **Fear rumours:** These reflect the anxieties of the community, which are the most prevalent type.
- **Hostility rumours:** These reflect threats to the community or prejudices and often target outside groups.

WHY DO WE ADDRESS RUMOURS?

If rumours are not identified and responded to, their spread can have serious consequences, especially in an emergency context. It can create confusion, suffering or anger; provoke negative behaviour; and undermine the effectiveness of our humanitarian programming. This is why it is important to put in place appropriate methods to identify and monitor rumours, to verify the facts behind the rumours and to engage with communities in order to respond and counter the spread of rumours. Especially considering the large scale of the ESSN, one of the world's largest humanitarian cash programs, it is inevitable that rumours will arise and have an impact on the 1.7 million refugees who receive the cash assistance every month.

TRACKING AND MANAGING RUMOURS

TRC and IFRC are committed to managing rumours that can have an impact on the programme. This can include the following types of rumors:

1. Rumors about the ESSN (e.g. changes in the selection criteria, eligibility, duration of the programme, or increase/ decrease of the transfer amount).

2. Rumors about societal issues (e.g. COVID-19 outbreak or social cohesion)

IFRC and TRC have developed a Rumour Tracking and Management System that captures, analyzes and responses to the programme related rumours in an effective manner. According to this system, rumours are identified by or conveyed to IFRC and TRC via miscellaneous channels such as TRC 168 Call Center, official KIZILAYKART Facebook & Website, field staff, TRC Service Centers, as well as other humanitarian actors and stakeholders. After collecting the rumours in a structured database, the analysis is made by taking various factors into consideration such as emergency level, data privacy and consent, sources and circulation channels, geographical coverage, direct or indirect relevance to ESSN Programme, affected populations, and expectation management. Following the analysis, rumour response strategy is designed accordingly and response is provided via the most appropriate and effective channels. The most common rumour response channels of ESSN Programme are official social media accounts, official website of KIZILAYKART, TRC 168 Call Center, TRC Service Centers, field staff and inter-agency coordination mechanisms. As a final stage, in order to share the outputs and examples, IFRC and TRC prepare rumour reports and hope to receive any kind of feedback and suggestion that can further enhance Rumour Tracking and Management System.

- During the remote focus group discussions held in July 2020, participants identified rumours related to:

1. A possible increase in the amount of ESSN cash assistance.
2. Fear of the mortality rate for COVID-19 being much higher than officially announced.

- On the TRC KIZILAYKART website and Facebook page, further rumours were received:

1. The amount of cash assistance per person for ESSN would be increased from 120 TL to 200 TL.
2. The A101 (grocery store chain) e-voucher would be distributed throughout the Southeast region for ESSN recipients, which was, in reality, a different programme planned to be implemented by TRC Community Migration Based (CMB) Programmes in Hatay and Gaziantep.
3. Families with one child would be eligible for ESSN assistance.

Here are some specific examples of rumours tracked via TRC 168 Call Center and responses given to address them:

> *"We have seen on social media that all of the families previously rejected and removed from ESSN will be accepted for assistance due to COVID-19 pandemic, is that true?"*
>
> **Şanlıurfa, Male, May 2020 / TRC 168 Call Center**

Response: ESSN programme has not made an official announcement as such and this is a rumour. Please make sure that you follow the official ESSN communication channels and social media accounts for any kind of information and update about the programme and beware of misinformation and fraud.

> *"We were told that families with two children would be eligible for ESSN assistance, is that true?"*
>
> **Bolu, Female, June 2020 / TRC 168 Call Center**

Response: There has been no change in the eligibility criteria for ESSN assistance and this is a rumour. Please make sure that you follow the official ESSN communication channels and social media accounts for any kind of information and update about the programme and beware of misinformation and fraud.
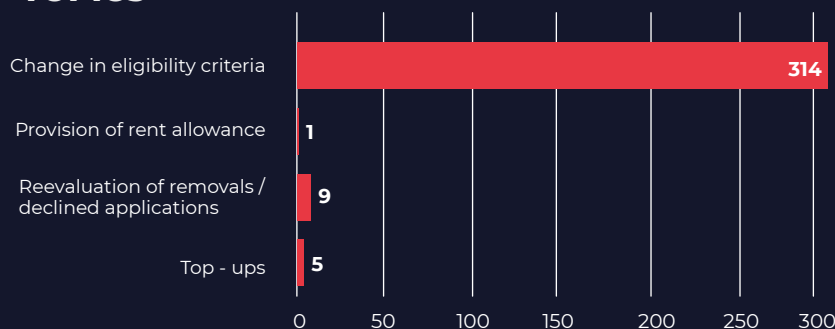
RUMOURS PER PROVINCE

Based on the feedback from the callers, the rumors were mainly spread through social media channels which may explain how widely and rapidly it could circulate throughout the country. In addition to the data per provinces given on the map above, a total of 55 rumours have been received from 20 provinces across the country including Kocaeli, Eskisehir, Malatya, Sivas, Aydin, Bolu, Adiyaman, Kahramanmaras, Kilis, Samsun and Osmaniye.
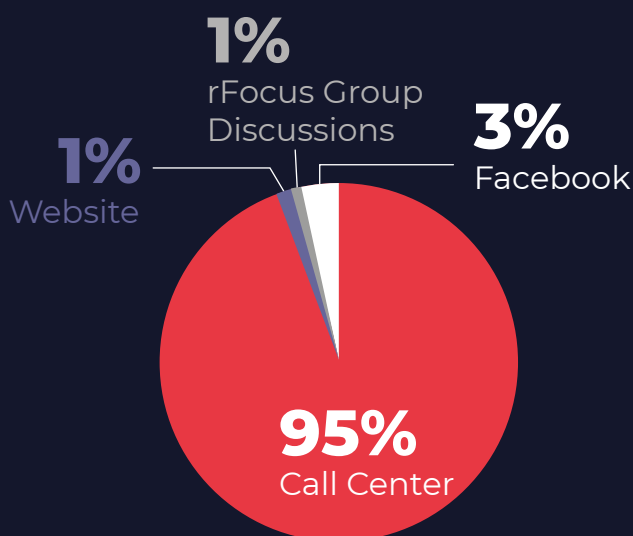
● *RUMOURS COLLECTED VIA TRC 168 CALL CENTER*

TOPICS

- Change in eligibility criteria: **314**
- Provision of rent allowance: **1**
- Reevaluation of removals / declined applications: **9**
- Top - ups: **5**

(Bar chart axis: 0, 50, 100, 150, 200, 250, 300)

Main topic during tracking period:
Are families with two children eligible for ESSN?

GENDER

43% female

57% male

Gender dissemination among the inquirers of the rumors is dominated by male inquirers to some extent.
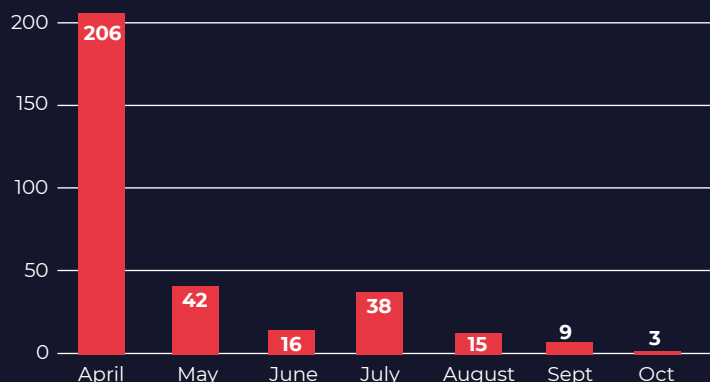
As a response, TRC 168 call centre operators informed the callers thoroughly and guided them on how to receive reliable information about the programme. In addition to that, IFRC and TRC utilized other communication channels, such as the Kizilaykart website or Facebook account and revised available information on these channels to prevent further spread of misinformation. Increased number of posts have been shared on the social media showing the programme eligibility criteria and transfer value.
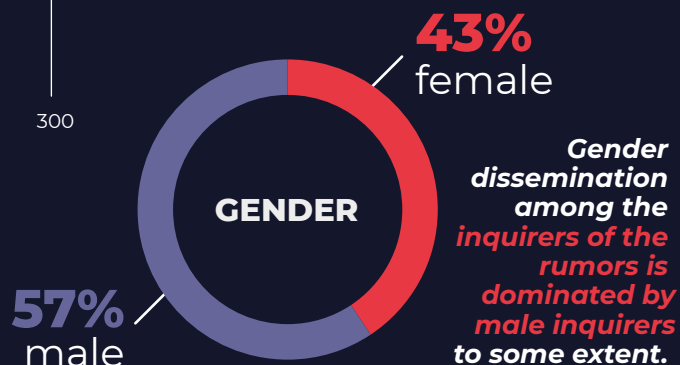
However, this is in line with the dissemination of the received calls as per gender in general. All of the rumors were received by Arabic language speakers.

1% rFocus Group Discussions

1% Website

3% Facebook

95% Call Center

MONTHS

- April: **206**
- May: **42**
- June: **16**
- July: **38**
- August: **15**
- Sept: **9**
- Oct: **3**

(Bar chart axis: 0, 50, 100, 150, 200)

Rumors peaked in the month of April, when COVID-19 cases started to increase consistently in Turkey.

Communication Channels

We kindly invite internal and external stakeholders to help us track the rumours via using these channels:

- **TRC KIZILAYKART Website:**
  www.platform.kizilaykart.org
  www.kizilaykart-suy.org

- **TRC 168 Toll Free Call Center:**
  Available at 08.00-18.00 from Monday to Friday and at 09.00-13.00 on Saturdays.

- **TRC KIZILAYKART Facebook Page:**
  www.facebook.com/Kizilaykart.SUY

Focal Points for Rumour Tracking

- **Turkish Red Crescent (TRC):**

Emine Erbil Günel - *AAP Senior Team Leader* - eminee@kizilay.org.tr

Hanifi Kinacı - *Coordination Team Leader* - hanifi.kinaci@kizilay.org.tr

- **International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC):**

Kutaiba Alhasan - *CEA Officer* - kutaiba.alhasan@ifrc.org

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