

Press Release by the Indian Scientists' Response to CoViD-19 (ISRC) Group
13 April, 2020

Scientists, science communicators and artists work together to help citizens navigate life during coronavirus

The coronavirus pandemic has thrown life out of gear for almost everyone, across all sections of the society. Every day the number of infected persons go up, new hotspots are declared, new restrictions are set on movements and a new mix of authentic and fake messages bombard people through social media. How does one deal with all of this and get some life lessons during this coronavirus lock down period? How are people in low-income groups in India to manage in these times, to prepare themselves?

The Indian Scientists Response to CoViD-19 (ISRC) group has now come up with a new series of infographics titled “Do what it takes, don’t believe in fakes” with DOs and DON’Ts related to the coronavirus pandemic. Another series, titled “Covid: Stories from the ground” presents stories of ordinary people living in cramped conditions but yet must practice physical distancing and suggested hygiene practices. ISRC has worked with Dnyati Wagh, Founder and Creative Director of Ideartive, and other artists to generate infographics and illustrations. Both series, available in many Indian languages, use sketches inspired by activities from our daily lives to present content with scientific accuracy and sensitivity to Indian reality.

In the “Do what it takes, don’t believe in fakes” series, messages highlight the dangers of spitting in public areas and provide awareness about physical distancing, personal hygiene when outside or when quarantined, and when going out for shopping essentials. “Intelligent people do not believe in fakes” said Sonali Sengupta, guest faculty in Microbiology at the University of Delhi, explaining that “the series aims to inspire people to use scientific knowledge and common sense in their daily lives during these uncertain times.”

The “Covid: Stories from the ground” series tells stories of Selvi, the caregiver who manages a family of six in a slum and handles isolation; Manickam the shopkeeper; Akash, a young man who makes food deliveries; a family cooking: all these scenarios highlighting different aspects of hygiene and care needed now. “Our content is targeted at people from the poorer sections of the society” said Spoorthy Raman, Managing Editor at Research Matters. “Many of us are here because we want to use our skills as scientists to discuss, understand, analyse, rebut false assertions at this time of COVID-19”, added Prof. R Geeta (Professor of Botany, Univ of Delhi, Retd).

ISRC believes that these resources will assist the country in flattening the curve of virus infections. They are available for download and sharing through social media from the ISRC website at: <https://indscicov.in> (also google drive at <http://tiny.cc/indscicov-infographics>) and at <https://indscicov.in/popularization-resources/>

Quotes are provided below from several translators associated with this pan India collaboration in science communication in their own mother tongues.

Meet the Translators

Translator's Home Language: Kannada

Name: Spoorthy Raman
Identity: Science Writer and Communicator
Organisation: Gubbi Labs
City: Bangalore

Quote In English:

The world today is facing two pandemics —the COVID-19 caused by the novel coronavirus and the infodemic caused by a flurry of misinformation circulated about the virus and the disease. Unfortunately, both are taking a toll on us. Thanks to social media, a click of a button is enough to spread false information that could potentially be life threatening. This initiative is a step towards fighting misinformation and helping the world see this pandemic through the lens of science.

Quote in Native language:

ಇಂದು ಜಗತ್ತು ಎರಡು ಮಹಾಮಾರಿಗಳನ್ನು ಎದುರಿಸುತ್ತಿದೆ. ಒಂದು ಹೊಸ ಕೊರೋನಾ ವೈರಸ್ ನಿಂದಾದ ಕೋವಿಡ್-೧೯, ಮತ್ತೊಂದು ಇದರ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ಹರಿಯುತ್ತಿರುವ ತಪ್ಪು ಮಾಹಿತಿಯ ಮಹಾಪೂರ. ಎರಡು ಇಡೀ ಮಾನವಕುಲಕ್ಕೆ ದೊಡ್ಡ ಕಂಟಕ. ಇಂದಿನ ಸಾಮಾಜಿಕ ಜಾಲತಾಣಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಒಂದು ಗುಂಡಿ ಒತ್ತುವ ಮೂಲಕ ಸುಳ್ಳು ಸುದ್ದಿಗಳು ಕಾಳಿಚ್ಚಿನಂತೆ ಹರಡುತ್ತಿವೆ. ನಮ್ಮ ಈ ಪ್ರಯತ್ನ ಇಂತಹ ಸುಳ್ಳು ಸುದ್ದಿ ಹರಡುವುದನ್ನು ತಡೆದು ಈ ಸಾಂಕ್ರಮಿಕವನ್ನು ವಿಜ್ಞಾನದ ದೃಷ್ಟಿಯಿಂದ ತೋರುವ ಹಾದಿಯಲ್ಲಿದೆ.

Translator's Home Language: Marathi

Name: Rohini Karandikar
Identity: Science educator and communicator
Organization: Curiosity Gym
City: Mumbai

Quote In English:

We are currently battling two enemies- the novel coronavirus and the related fake news along with unscientific information. Communicating the correct information will help allay fears and enable us to put up a stronger fight against the pandemic.

Quote in Native language:

आपण सध्या दोन शत्रूंची लढत आहोत- कोरोनावायरस आणि त्यासंबंधित बनावट बातम्या व अवैज्ञानिक माहिती. योग्य माहिती लोकांपर्यंत पोहोचवल्यास कोरोनाबद्दल असलेली भीती कमी होईल व आपण या महामारीविरुद्ध उत्तम लढा देऊ शकू.

Translator's Home Language: Tamil

Name: T. V. Venkateswaran
Identity: Science writer and communicator

Institute: Vigyan Prasar

City: New Delhi

Quote In English:

In a situation like this it's important to do two things, one is communicating to people that they need to be alert, not alarmed. Fake news and hoax create panic and lower your guard.

Quote in Native language:

இந்த அசாதாரண சூழலில் அலட்சிய மனப்பான்மையும் கூடாது அதீத பீதியும் கூடாது. ஆனால் போலி செய்திகளும் மிகை கூற்றுகளும் நம்மை ஒருபக்கம் அச்சம் கொள்ள செய்கிறது மற்றபக்கம் அசட்டை மனப்போக்கை தூண்டுகிறது.

Translator's Home Language: Manipuri

Name: Shanta Laishram

Identity: Mathematician

Institute: Indian Statistical Institute

City: New Delhi

Quote In English:

In this crucial juncture, it is important to know facts and real information about Coronavirus and Covid-19 and we should be careful, not to be afraid without a valid reason. Not only we should be aware of fake information, we must also not share anything without verifying it first, particularly any doubtful information that may create panic.

Quote in Native language:

হৌজিকী লুরবা তানজাশিদা কোরোনা ভাইরাস অমসুং কোবিদ-19 গী মতাংদা অশেংবা ইনফোরমেশন খঙদোকপা মরু ওই অমসুং চেকশীল্লা লৈগদবনী, মরম লৈতনা কিরোইদবনি। ঐথোইনা শেমজিন-শাজিনবা পাওজেল শিং খঙদোকপা দরকার ওইবদা নত্তনা অশেংবা খঙদোকতনা করিগুস্বা অমত্তা শন্দোকপীরোইদবনী, মরুওইনা অতোপ্পদা কীহনবা য়াবা চিংনিঙাই ওইবা পাওজেলশিং।

Translator's Home Language: Bengali

Name: Ayan Banerjee

Identity: Physicist

Institute: IISER Kolkata

City: Mohanpur

Quote In English:

These are strange, unprecedented times. It is crucial that a panic reaction does not set in among ordinary people - especially in a country as populous as India where the majority has low levels of education. It is crucial that positivity be retained, yet credible information be made available - since any suppression of facts may lead to vicious, and often uncontrollable rumours.

Quote in Native language:

এ এক অদ্ভুত ও অভূতপূর্ব সময়ের মধ্যে দিয়ে যাচ্ছি আমরা। ভারতের মতো জনবহুল ও বৈচিত্র্যময় দেশে সর্বপ্রথম প্রয়োজন মানুষের মধ্যে অযথা আতঙ্ক ছড়িয়ে না পড়া, কারণ মনে

রাখতে হবে যে আমাদের দেশে অশিক্ষা ও যুক্তিবাদের অভাব - দুটিই প্রবল। সদর্শক চিন্তা বা ভাব টিকিয়ে রাখা, এবং তার সঙ্গে সঠিক ও বিশ্বাসযোগ্য তথ্য-বিতরণও খুবই জরুরি, কারণ না হলে ভূয়ো খবর ও গুজব রটতে বাধ্য, আর তাহলেই সমূহ বিপদ!

Translator's Home Language: Urdu
Name: Tuba Khan
Identity: Teacher Educator (Science and Mathematics)
Institute: TISS
City: Mumbai
Quote In English:

The current conditions are weird. In such cases, the risk of uncertainty and, to some extent, social misunderstanding may increase if credible explanations are not available. We have to avoid such incidents happening in India. We should work together at the highest level to prevent this outbreak. Along with the information, we have to take care of the people around us as far as possible, seeing that no one goes hungry. One has to be careful not to cause panic among the people.

Quote in Native language:

ابھی کے موجودہ حالات عجیب و غریب ہیں۔ ایسے میں اگر قابل اعتماد معلومات ابھی دستیاب نہ ہوں تو غیر یقینی اور کسی حد تک سماجی غلط فہمی کا خطرہ بڑھ سکتا ہے۔ ہمیں اس طرح کے واقعات ہندوستان میں رونما ہوں اس سے بچنا ہوگا۔ ہمیں پوری طرح سے اس وبا کے روتھام کے لیے مل کر اعلیٰ سطح پر کوشش کرنی چاہئے۔ معلومات کے ساتھ ساتھ ہمیں جہاں تک ہو سکے اپنے آس پاس کے لوگوں کا ابھی خیال رکھنا ہوگا، یہ دیکھتے ہوئے کہ کوئی بھوکا نہ رہ گیا ہو۔ عوام میں خوف و ہراس نہ پیدا ہو اس بات کا خاص خیال رکھنا ہوگا۔

Translator's Home Language: Konkani
Name: Sarita Kamat
Identity: Scientist
Organization:
City: Mumbai
Quote In English:

Majority of the people in the world today are facing a pandemic as big as Covid-19, probably for the first time. The result is fear and panic - further amplified by false news/advice. This is an attempt by us scientists and science communicators across India to put before the public, facts about Covid-19 and also the science behind it, in simple words and means.

Quote in Native language:

जगातल्या बहुसंख्य लोकांखातीर इतल्या व्हडल्या साथीचो हो पयलोच अनुभव आसतलो. सर्गेळ्यांच्या मनान भंय निर्माण जाला - फट खबरींनी/सल्ल्यांनी हो भंय आनीकूय वाढला. हयाचखातीर, आमी संशोधक आनी विज्ञान संप्रेषक एकठांय येवून प्रयत्न करता - लोकांफुडें कोविड-१९ बदलचें ज्ञान आनी विद्यान सोप्या रीतीन सांगपाचो.

Translator's Home Language: Telugu
Name: A. S. R. Koti and Venu Gopal Achanta
Identity: Scientists
Organization: TIFR, Mumbai
City: Mumbai

Quote In English:

In this age of information, finding the correct information is important so that we do not panic from the spam. This is an attempt by a group of scientists to separate truth from myths and to provide people about the basics of COVID-19 and dos and don'ts.

Quote in Native language:

ఈ కాలంలో, మనకి నిజం ఏమిటో, అబద్ధం(స్పామ్) ఏమిటో తెలుసుకోవడం కష్టం అవుతుంది. కోవిడ్-19 గురించి మనకి ఉన్న అపోహలు తొలగించి, ఈ వైరస్ నుంచి మనల్ని మనం కాపాడుకోవడానికి ఏమి చెయ్యాలో తెలియచేయడానికి కొంతమంది వైజ్ఞానికులు కలసి చేసిన ప్రయత్నం ఇది.

Translator's Home Language: Hindi
Name: Divya Oberoi
Identity: Scientist
Organization: National Centre for Radio Astrophysics, TIFR
City: Pune

Quote In English:

Right now, providing people reliable information in an understandable manner and fighting the spread of misinformation are needs of the hour. An informed population is best empowered to deal with this situation. In absence of accessible credible information, it is easy for misconceptions to take root and spread. This is an attempt by scientists and educators from across the country to provide credible do and don't, and separate myths from facts.

Quote in Native language:

इस समय की सबसे बड़ी माँग है देशवासियों तक भरोसेमंद जानकारी सरल भाषा में पहुँचाना। जागरूप जनता ही इस परिस्थिति का सामना करने में सबसे सक्षम होगी। भरोसेमंद जानकारी के अभाव में भ्रांतियाँ और गलतफहमीयाँ आसानी से पनपती और फैलती हैं। यह देश भर के वैज्ञानिकों और शिक्षकों का प्रयास है अपने देशवासियों तक भरोसेमंद जानकारी पहुँचाने का, क्या किया जाये और क्या नहीं यह बताने का, और असत्य और सत्य में भेद करने का।

10. Translator's Home Language: Malayalam
Name: Manoj Puravankara & Maneesha N.
Identity: Scientists
Organization: TIFR, Mumbai
City: Mumbai
Quote In English:

The most important ally in our battle against the pandemic is a well-informed citizenry. Ensuring people have access to reliable and scientifically accurate information, therefore, becomes the priority. This task is made all the more difficult by the proliferation of misinformation, hoaxes, and myths in social media and other spaces. This is an attempt by scientists and science communicators across India to fight the misinformation and bust hoaxes and to provide scientifically credible information to people in a simple, accessible way.

Quote in Native language:

ഒരു മഹാമാരിയെ നേരിടാനുള്ള ഏറ്റവും ശക്തമായ ആയുധം ശാസ്ത്രീയബോധമുള്ള ഒരു ജനതയാണ്. രോഗത്തെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള വിശ്വാസയോഗ്യവും, ശാസ്ത്രീയവുമായ വിവരങ്ങൾ ജനങ്ങളിലെത്തിക്കുന്നതിനായിരിക്കണം ഇപ്പോൾ മുൻഗണന. സാമൂഹ്യ മാധ്യമങ്ങളിലൂടെയും, മറ്റു പൊതു ചർച്ചയിടങ്ങളിലൂടെയും വ്യാജ വാർത്തകൾ പ്രചരിക്കപ്പെടുന്നത് ഒരു പ്രധാന വെല്ലുവിളിയാണ്. ഈ എളിയ സംരംഭത്തിലൂടെ, ഇന്ത്യയുടെ നാനാ ഭാഗത്തു നിന്നുമുള്ള ശാസ്ത്രജ്ഞർ വ്യാജ വാർത്തകളെയും തെറ്റായ വിവരങ്ങളെയും പ്രതിരോധിക്കുകയും, വസ്തുനിഷ്ഠവും, ശാസ്ത്രീയ സാധുതയുമുള്ള വിവരങ്ങൾ ലളിതമായ ഭാഷയിൽ അവതരിപ്പിക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുന്നു.

11. Translator's Home Language: Assamese

Name: Probodh Borah
Identity: Professor
Organization: Assam Agricultural University
City: Guwahati

Quote In English:

The most important ally in our battle against the pandemic is a well-informed citizenry. Ensuring people have access to reliable and scientifically accurate information, therefore, becomes the priority. This task is made all the more difficult by the proliferation of misinformation, hoaxes, and myths in social media and other spaces. This is an attempt by scientists and science communicators across India to fight the misinformation and bust hoaxes and to provide scientifically credible information to people in a simple, accessible way.

Quote in Native language:

সাম্প্রতিক বিশ্ব মহামাৰীৰ বিৰুদ্ধে আমাৰ যুঁজখনৰ সফলতাৰ বাবে প্ৰয়োজনীয় সবাতোকৈ গুৰুত্বপূৰ্ণ কথাটো হ'ল সকলোকে সজাগ কৰি তোলা। সেইবাবে, জনসাধাৰণক বিশ্বাসযোগ্য আৰু বৈজ্ঞানিকভাৱে শুদ্ধ তথ্যসমূহ যোগান ধৰাটো আমাৰ প্ৰধান কৰ্তব্য। সামাজিক মাধ্যমসমূহত আৰু অন্যান্য স্থানত অশুদ্ধ তথ্য, উৰা বাতৰি আৰু ভুল ধাৰণা প্ৰচাৰিত হোৱাৰ ফলত এই কাম অতি দুৰূহ হৈ পৰিছে। এইয়া হৈছে সমগ্ৰ ভাৰতবৰ্ষৰ বিজ্ঞানী আৰু বিজ্ঞান লেখকসকলৰ এক অন্যতম প্ৰচেষ্টা যাতে

অশুদ্ধ আৰু ভুৱা বাতৰিৰ বিৰুদ্ধে যুঁজ দি জনসাধাৰণক বৈজ্ঞানিকভাৱে শুদ্ধ বাতৰি
এক সৰল ভাষাত সহজে উপলব্ধ কৰাব পৰা যায়।

12. Translator's Home Language: Portuguese

Name: Carlos Alexandre Wuensche

Identity: Cosmologist

Institute: Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas Espaciais - INPE

City: São José dos Campos, São Paulo - Brazil

Quote In English:

Combating CoVid-19 is perhaps the first challenge to mobilize the human species as a whole against an apparently weak enemy, but whose lethal potential is proving more and more every day. It is essential that scientists are supported and encouraged to quickly find solutions that can protect humanity. Brazil is the fifth largest country in the world in terms of area and population, with low levels of education and information. The wave of fake news about CoVid-19 also occurs in Brazil, bringing confusion, insecurity, panic and relaxation. The moment is to be attentive, well informed and protected.

Quote in native language:

O combate ao CoVid-19 talvez seja o primeiro desafio a mobilizar a espécie humana como um todo contra um inimigo aparentemente fraco, mas cujo potencial letal vem se mostrando cada vez maior a cada dia. É fundamental que cientistas sejam apoiados e estimulados a encontrar rapidamente soluções que possam resguardar a humanidade. O Brasil é o quinto maior país do mundo em área e em população, com baixos níveis de educação e informação. A onda de fake news sobre o CoVid-19 também ocorre no Brasil, trazendo confusão, insegurança, pânico e relaxamento. O momento é de estar atento, bem informado e protegido.

Resources for the Media and Public

Indian Scientists' Response to CoViD-19 Website

<https://indscicov.in/>

Hoax Busters Website

<https://indscicov.in/busting-hoaxes/>

Dos and Don'ts Infographics for Download in Various Indian Languages

<http://tiny.cc/indscicov-infographics>

Covid: Stories from the Ground:

<https://indscicov.in/popularization-resources/>