

# Social listening enabled the Philippine Government to adapt its COVID-19 communication strategies and messaging to the shifting narratives on policy, scientific progress, and public perception.

## From Narratives to Actions: How Social Listening Encourages Proactive and Reactive Pandemic Response in the Philippines

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### INTRODUCTION

The Department of Health (DOH) led the Philippine government's COVID-19 response in partnership with international and local organizations, businesses, and communities.

Among the challenges faced by the DOH were delivering useful information and evidence-based health solutions and combating disinformation and misinformation among millions of Filipinos who were kept under lockdown during most of the pandemic.

Social listening is one of the important activities that helped DOH develop strategies to effectively provide lifesaving information and health interventions to keep the public safe and protected.

### DESCRIPTION OF INTERVENTION

Breakthrough ACTION, USAID's flagship program for social and behavior change, worked with a communications agency, Evident, to conduct social listening on COVID-19 (Figure 1).

Meltwater, a media monitoring tool, was used as the main social listening instrument. Search query structures (Table 1) were designed and periodically updated to reflect COVID-19 related keywords in English and Filipino (Table 2). This helped track news narratives and social media discourse of Filipinos regarding COVID-19.

### OBJECTIVE:

Track and synthesize online discourse related to COVID-19 prevention and vaccination to uncover insights that could help the DOH and its partners develop appropriate interventions in response to the health crisis.

### RESULTS

The initial strategy for social listening followed a weekly monitoring format (Figure 2), generating reports (Figure 3) from mid-March to the last week of June 2020. This allowed government and non-government actors to swiftly adjust their COVID-19 interventions and curb misinformation on social media. Public reception of new information shaped the DOH's development of proactive and reactive COVID-19 health messages.

With the shift in government interventions, the conversation and stories surrounding COVID-19 also changed. Social listening activities became adaptive to this evolving online discourse. The result was the adoption of a biweekly reporting format from June 2021 to May 2022 to move from tactical approach to providing strategic communication recommendations.

### DISCUSSION

Social listening enables a more informed decision-making and strategy development process and a more agile response during crisis situations.

Social listening mechanisms should be in place prior to the onset of a health crisis to monitor the narratives being shared across different platforms as well as to gather feedback from the public. By using insights from social listening activities, proactive health messages can be developed to help dispel myths and ease public concerns.

In the long run, social listening can serve as a monitoring and evaluation tool to help improve health communication during outbreaks, disaster responses, and other health emergencies.

### HIGHLIGHTS

Figure 1: Social Listening Cycle



Figure 2: Social Listening Report Format



Figure 3: Sample Sentiment Analysis from a Social Listening Report

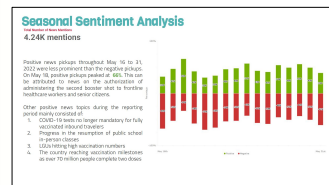


Table 1: Main Board Boolean (from Vaccine Confidence Scan)

((COVID-19 OR COVID OR Coronavirus) AND (bakuna OR vaccine\*)) OR  
gamaleya OR sinovac OR sinopharm OR astrazeneca OR  
oxford-astrazeneca OR astra OR az OR moderna OR novavax OR pfizer OR  
pfizer-biontech OR biontech OR "spjutnik v" OR covovax OR novovax OR  
vaccination OR "vaccination program" OR "resbakuna" OR "vaccinated"  
OR "bakunado" OR "nabakunahan" OR "fully vaccinated"

Table 2: Sample Monitored Keywords (from Vaccine Confidence Scan)

CATEGORY / THEMES	QUERIES OR KEYWORDS
Vaccination	((COVID-19 AND (bakuna OR vaccine*)) OR vaccination OR "vaccination program" OR "vaccinated" OR "bakunado" OR "nabakunahan" OR "fully vaccinated"
Vaccine Brands and Side Effects	gamaleya OR sinovac OR sinopharm OR astrazeneca OR oxford-astrazeneca OR astra OR az OR moderna OR pfizer OR pfizer-biontech OR biontech OR "spjutnik v" OR covovax OR novovax  ("side effect" OR "sakit ng ulo" OR pagkahiho OR diziness OR headache OR fever OR ligpit) AND (gamaleya OR sinovac OR sinopharm OR astrazeneca OR oxford-astrazeneca OR astra OR az OR moderna OR pfizer OR pfizer-biontech OR biontech OR "spjutnik v" OR covovax OR novovax)

