



Internews

COMMUNITY BULLETIN #2
APRIL 2022

The Sudan Rooted in Trust Project aims to address COVID-19 rumors, perceptions, and misinformation by collecting and analyzing rumors found on Sudanese social media. This bulletin is based on an analysis of 213 posts collected in Arabic between 23 February and 23 March 2022, from Facebook and Twitter.

In this week's bulletin we shed light on a variety of rumors, such as Pfizer vaccines are not stored correctly in Sudan, does the vaccine affect the menstrual period, will the vaccine break your fast, and how the Russia-Ukraine war affected the pandemic. This regular collection of community insights aims to address questions and common misperceptions about COVID-19 found across Sudan. It is meant to help volunteers and field staff provide trustworthy information, and resources to help respond to their communities' concerns and information needs around COVID-19 and the vaccines.

COVID-19 in Sudan

As of 4 April 2022, the official COVID-19 statistics rose to 61,987 confirmed cases, compared to 61,554 confirmed cases on 4 March 2022. As of 30 March 2022, a total of 6,761,896 vaccine doses had been administered.

How are rumors collected?

Misconceptions, questions, and comments about COVID-19 were collected by Internews' analysts, who compiled and assessed feedback gathered from Sudanese social media. The rumors, perceptions and misinformation identified have been assessed to be the most prevalent or damaging to the health response. Selection was based on the level of engagement and potential harm to the community.

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MINISTRY OF HEALTH
COVID-19 HOTLINE - SERVING ALL
AREAS OF SUDAN: 9090

“
MINISTRY OF HEALTH FACEBOOK
PAGE
WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/FMOH.SUDAN

“
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION
WWW.EMRO.WHO.INT/AR

COVID-19 IS REAL AND THERE ARE NEW CASES DIAGNOSED ALL THE TIME!
BE SAFE: MAINTAIN PHYSICAL DISTANCE, WASH YOUR HANDS, WEAR A MASK

WHAT ARE RUMORS?

Rumors are currently circulating stories or UNVERIFIED content of uncertain or doubtful information collected from first-hand sources within the community which could take the shape of a question, criticism, or general comments on a situation or topic. Rumors can be tricky because they might have some element of truth in them!

RUMOUR
ANSWER

RUMOR RISK LEVEL HIGH MEDIUM LOW

RUMOUR #1

SAFETY

“They imposed on them an injection with a vaccine that doesn't work”
 Woman -Twitter (Healthcare Worker)

ANSWER

In Sudan, like most countries, COVID-19 vaccines are recommended by health authorities but are not compulsory. However, some countries have required a vaccine certificate or negative PCR result for international travel purposes, or to access shops and restaurants, as these spaces may pose a high-risk for contracting a COVID-19 infection. Currently, in Sudan travelers are required to present a negative PCR result at the airport.

Vaccines are the most effective way to prevent infectious diseases. If enough people are vaccinated it can reduce or eradicate some diseases, such as smallpox and polio. They also protect you, and your family and community against dangerous viruses, such as COVID-19. The vaccines can protect us from developing severe symptoms, and can prevent death from the Coronavirus, especially for those with chronic diseases. They teach our bodies how to fight the virus before entering our system. It's much safer for our immune system to learn this through vaccination than by catching the virus. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, widespread vaccination is a critical tool to help end the pandemic.

We should refrain from sharing rumors and disinformation within our communities, as this could have negative effects on our community, creating hesitancy around the vaccine. This is especially damaging when it is coming from a healthcare worker, as they are considered trusted sources of information within our communities. Misinformation can also result in us making poor decisions about our health, especially for people who do not have access to the right resources to answer their questions and concerns. If you would like to ask a question or express a concern about the vaccines, kindly call the national hotline number at 9090.

HIGH RISK

RUMOUR #2

POLITICAL AGENDA

“The Russian-Ukrainian war and its impact on #Sudan and the sudden disappearance of #Corona from the world.. in a new episode of #Zol_Cafe with Mohamed Awaida tonight, 20:30 Jerusalem time via Arab TV platforms on social media” Man -Facebook

ANSWER

COVID-19 cases are still being reported all over the world, even if the news agenda has diverted to cover other global or regional news. In China, where the virus was first identified, more than 26,000 cases were recorded on 10 April 2022, making it the country's largest COVID-19 outbreak in two years. In Sudan, since the start of the Russia-Ukraine war in February 2022, the Ministry of Health registered more than 580 new cases.

According to the Ministry of Health, as of 22 March, nearly 62,000 cases have been reported in the country. Downplaying the virus can be a dangerous act as cases are still being reported all over the world, with the World Health Organization reporting COVID-19 statistics on a regular basis on their webpage. It is our social responsibility to beware of the type of information that we share online and offline as it can have negative impacts on the life of others, and it can also be life-threatening as this virus has killed millions all over the world.

The Ministry of Health recommends that we follow the preventative measures to protect ourselves and loved ones from the risks of catching the virus and having it spread in our communities, which can lead to serious health complications, and even result in death. To access the latest COVID-19 statistics and updates please visit the Ministry of Health's Facebook page.

HIGH RISK

RUMOUR #3

VACCINE AGENDA

“The second dose, they said, is complementary to the first, and if you get Corona, it will have a weak effect. The third, they said it was a booster and you wouldn’t get Corona.. and so on and so forth” Man -Twitter

Vaccines are one of the most effective methods to protect ourselves against harmful viruses. Vaccines has been around for a long time and have helped in saving a lot of people’s lives. The COVID-19-approved vaccines have been proven to be highly effective at preventing severe illness, hospitalization, and death. The more people get vaccinated, the lower the chances are for the virus to mutate and spread in our communities.

According to Dr Ismael Aladani, Director of the Expanded Program on Immunization at the Ministry of Health, they aim to vaccinate 20% of the population by June, and 52% by the end of 2022. Those who are more at risk of contracting COVID-19, like healthcare workers, older adults, and people with chronic diseases, who took the second dose of the two-dosing vaccines, like AstraZeneca, or the one-dose of Johnson & Johnson, are now eligible for a booster shot following six-month since their last dose. Dr Aladani explains that the booster shot enhances our immunity against the virus and its variants.

Most of the approved vaccines in Sudan, such as AstraZeneca and Pfizer, require two doses according to their dosing schedule. It is noteworthy that it is highly important to take the second dose if you’re taking a two-dosing vaccine, as the first dose stimulates your immune system, while the second dose boosts your immune system’s response and better protects you against a COVID-19 infection. The second dose also helps in lengthening your immunity period against the virus.

For more information about the COVID-19 vaccines, you can speak to a healthcare worker by calling the national hotline for COVID-19 at 9090.

MEDIUM RISK

ANSWER

RUMOUR #4

PREVENTION

“And Dr Muhammad Abdul Rahman showed through his research that #malaria protects against the risk of infection from the Corona virus, due to the similarity of the immune response in the two cases” Unknown -Twitter

Having been exposed to Malaria does not reduce the risk of contracting a COVID-19 infection. Malaria-endemic countries like Sudan continue to register new COVID-19 cases. Scientists are still trying to understand how exposure to malaria impacts COVID-19 illness. In 2019 the Malaria epidemic in Sudan reached critical stages with 1.8 million cases registered across the country. White-Nile, Khartoum and the conflict affected Darfur region were the most impacted parts of the country.

According to the World Health Organization, in 2020, Sudan accounted for 56% percent of Malaria cases and 61% of Malaria deaths in the Eastern Mediterranean region, with more than 3.3 million cases registered in 2020.

Malaria is caused by the parasite Plasmodium, and you can become infected if an infected Anopheles mosquito bites you, while COVID-19 is an infectious respiratory disease that is caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. You can catch COVID-19 if you come in close contact with an infected person as it can be transmitted to you if they cough, sneeze, or speak. It can also be transmitted in poorly ventilated spaces, such as wedding halls and shops.

The best way to protect yourself against COVID-19 is to get vaccinated, while continuing to practice the recommended preventative measures, like wearing a face mask, and maintaining a physical distance of 1 meter from others. You can also protect yourself from the risks of getting Malaria by wearing long-sleeved clothing, disinfecting areas around your house where mosquitos can breed and making sure to place a bednet when sleeping outside.

MEDIUM RISK

ANSWER

RUMOUR #5

SAFETY

“I heard people say don’t take the Johnson vaccine, anyone who took it died after 10 days”
Woman -Facebook

According to the World Health Organization, the Johnson & Johnson (J&J) vaccine has been approved by the European Medicines Agency and the U.S Food and Drug Administration for public use. It has been noted that in some extremely rare cases adverse events have been reported. Doctors recommend getting vaccinated as the benefits outweigh the risks. So far, more than 18 million doses of J&J vaccine have been administered globally according to Our World in Data organization. In Sudan, as of February 2022, more than 1.4 million doses of the J&J vaccine had been administered.

Vaccines have been around for a long time, and they have proven to be the first line of defense during many health outbreaks in human history, such as polio and smallpox. Vaccines have helped save millions of lives. According to Dr Yagoub Mohamed Abdelmagid, Consultant of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Fertility, vaccines help our bodies develop antibodies that identify the virus when it enters our system and destroy it.

In the case of COVID-19, vaccines can help in limiting the spread of the virus in our communities, especially vulnerable groups, such as older adults and people with chronic diseases, as it reduces the risks of developing serious COVID-19 symptoms.

MEDIUM RISK

RUMOUR #6

POST-VACCINATION BEHAVIOR

“There are many women whose periods have been delayed after contracting Corona, and there are those who experienced a change in their cycle due to the vaccine” Woman -Facebook

“Me too, after I got vaccinated following two months, my period was delayed for two weeks then I got it even though it is usually very stable, I almost lost my mind” Woman -Facebook

According to the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI), anecdotal evidence suggests that the COVID-19 vaccines and a COVID-19 infection could temporarily affect women’s menstruation cycle, but these changes quickly reverted back to normal during the subsequent cycles. It was also noted that there was no difference in the number of days. However, it is important to note that many other factors could affect your menstruation cycle including stress, anxiety, and your diet.

According to the World Health Organization, women can take the COVID-19 vaccine when they’re menstruating, there is no scientific evidence that advises against taking the vaccine when on your period. If you’re considering taking the COVID-19 vaccine but have concerns or questions regarding the vaccine, you can visit the World Health Organization webpage or call the Sudanese Ministry of Health’s COVID-19 hotline at : 9090.

MEDIUM RISK

RUMOUR #7

POST-VACCINATION BEHAVIOR

“I am not convinced of Corona in the first place. I had to take the first dose of vaccination 3 months ago. It affected me severely. It brought back diseases the last time I had was 6 years ago, besides the cold that used to go away in two days now it's taking a month and last week I took the second dose, may God protect me” Unknown -Twitter

COVID-19 is a global pandemic and according to the [World Health Organization](#), as of 1 April 2022, more than 400 million cases of COVID-19 have been reported. In Sudan, as of 4 April 2022, nearly 62,000 COVID-19 cases have been reported. COVID-19 is a respiratory disease that is caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. It can spread quickly and can be life-threatening in some cases, which can leave you and your community at risk.

ANSWER

Vaccines have been proven to be safe for public use and go through rigorous testing. [Dr Ismael Aladani](#), Director of the Expanded Program on Immunization at the Ministry of Health, recommends that those most at risk, like healthcare workers older adults and people with chronic diseases get vaccinated. Most people experience mild to moderate side effects after taking the vaccine, which may last for a few days. Fever, fatigue and pain on the injection site are some of the most common side effects. In extremely rare cases, some people experience serious side effects, such as an allergic reaction to the vaccine.

If you are concerned about taking the vaccine you can consult with your local doctor as they will provide you with the best advice. You can also call the national pandemic hotline at 9090 to report severe side effects to the COVID-19 vaccine and seek support. You can also call the hotline to ask your other vaccine and COVID-related questions.

MEDIUM RISK

RUMOUR #8

SAFETY

“A Cold-chain needs stable electricity to ensure the required degree of cooling. Unfortunately, there is no stable electricity in Sudan, and secondly, the Pfizer vaccine needs a very low degree of cooling, reaching 70 below zero” Woman -Facebook

ANSWER

Pfizer vaccines are donated to Sudan through the COVAX facility, which is a worldwide initiative that aims to provide equal access to the COVID-19 vaccines, and accelerates the development and manufacturing of the vaccines.

According to UNICEF, Sudan has received five Ultra Cold Chain Units (UCCU) for the Pfizer vaccine, which are installed in the National Cold Storage facility of the Federal Ministry of Health. UCCU are needed to ensure the effectiveness of the Pfizer vaccine, as it needs to be stored in very cold temperatures. Sudan has ensured a stable power-supply for the Pfizer vaccines despite recurring power cuts, by installing back-up generators.

For more information about COVID-19 vaccination centers in Sudan, please visit the [Ministry of Health Facebook page](#). You can also speak to a healthcare worker by calling the national hotline for COVID-19 at 9090.

LOW RISK

RUMOUR #9

SAFETY

“Question regarding lactating and pregnant women, can they be vaccinated normally, will it have no effect on the baby?” Woman -Facebook

Dr Yagoub Mohamed Abdelmagid, Consultant of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Fertility at the Nile Center for Fertility in Khartoum 2, recommends that all women - pregnant, lactating and at child-bearing age – take the vaccine. He explains that the vaccines can protect the mother and baby during pregnancy, and after birth because the vaccine helps build antibodies that protect the mother and baby.

ANSWER

He also notes that all current COVID-19 vaccines do not cause a COVID-19 infection as they do not contain a live virus and cannot transmit the Coronavirus to the baby or mother. There is also no evidence that links an increase in the risk of miscarriages to the vaccine, nor does the vaccine cause birth defects, late delivery, or infertility.

Vaccination is essential for all individuals, especially women at the stage of pregnancy, post-pregnancy, postpartum, and during the lactating period. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, COVID-19 vaccines are recommended for women who are pregnant, breastfeeding, trying to get pregnant now or might become pregnant in the future. COVID-19 vaccines will protect you from developing serious symptoms if you catch the virus, especially if you have COVID-19 during pregnancy, you are at a higher risk of complications that can affect your pregnancy and the baby’s development.

LOW RISK

RUMOUR #10

RELIGION

“Hey beauties, do you think the Corona vaccine (breaks our fast)? I mean, I fasted and took the third dose? Is it okay to continue fasting or did I just break my fast or what?”
Woman -Facebook

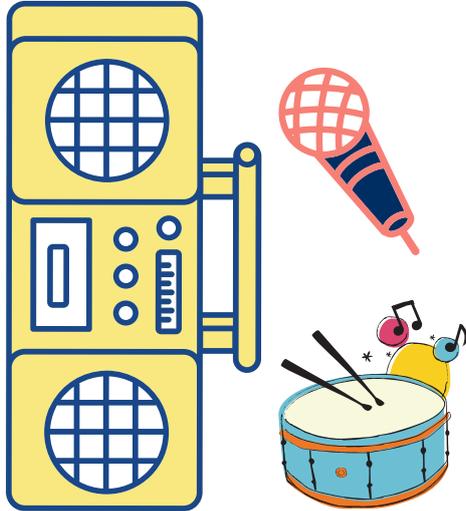
ANSWER

According to the International Islamic Fiqh Academy, taking the COVID-19 vaccines does not invalidate your fast, and it is permissible to take the vaccine while fasting. Contemporary Muslim scholars have deemed the non-nutritious injections inconsequential to the fast and would not invalidate it. This is the verdict (fatwa) of the International Islamic Fiqh Academy and various Islamic Institutes in several Muslim countries. The basis of this fatwa is that such injections are not like eating or drinking. There is no harm or issue in getting the COVID-19 vaccine while fasting during Ramadan.

To find the nearest vaccination center to you, please visit the Ministry of Health’s Facebook page for the latest updates, or contact the national pandemic hotline at 9090.

LOW RISK

COVID-19 Vaccine Songs

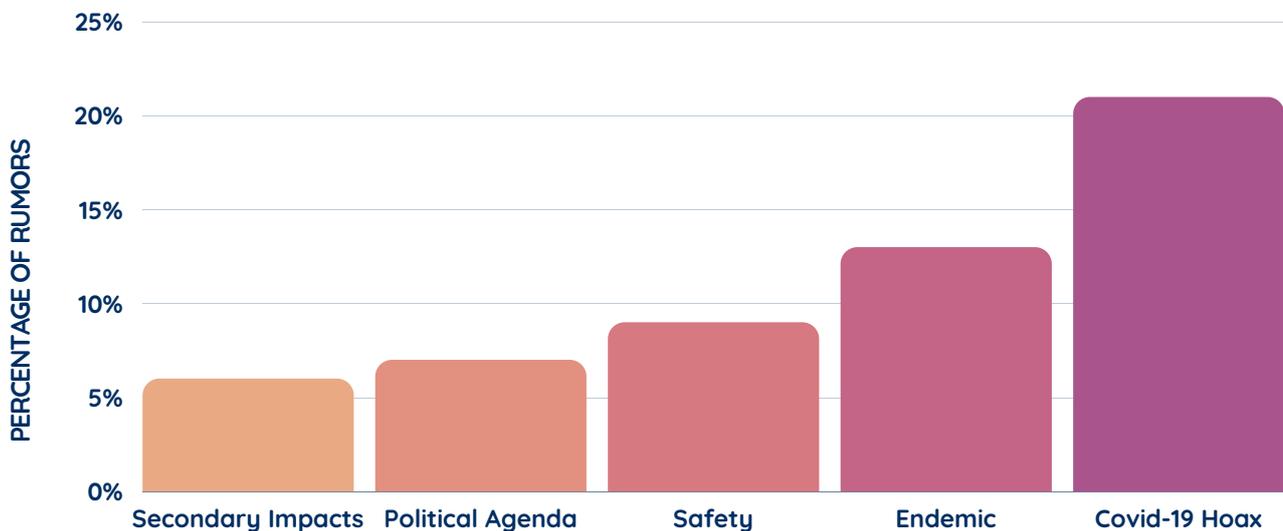


Insaf Madani, Sudanese singer, advocating for taking the vaccine: [click here](#).

Nubian singer Othman Humida, advocating for taking the vaccine in Nubian language: [click here](#).

Cartoon song about the vaccine: [click here](#).

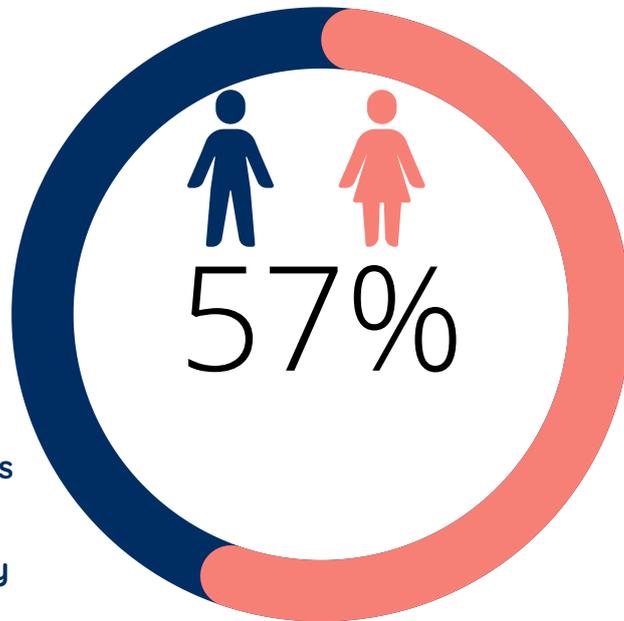
Top Rumor Themes



RUMOR THEMES

Top 5 rumor themes based on the analysis of 213 rumors collected in Arabic between 23 February and 23 March 2022

Rumor Breakdown by Gender



Gender breakdown based on the analysis of 213 rumors collected in Arabic between 23 February and 23 March 2022

COVID-19 and Vaccine Rumors on Social Media

Platform breakdown based on the analysis of 213 rumors collected in Arabic between 23 February and 23 March 2022

