

Lugara Community Factsheet

ABOUT THIS FACTSHEET

This Factsheet is meant for all stakeholders working with the communities like Community Health Workers, Health Care Workers, Outreach Workers, Community Leaders, Religious Leaders, Community Based Associations, and the community. RiT 2.0 Internews in South Sudan periodically collects feedback from the community, shares citizen's concerns on COVID-19 and works to serve communities by collecting rumors and misinformation to understand and address communities' concerns and information needs to strengthen information ecosystem, the vaccine, and other complex health topics. We respond by increasing the flow of accurate, timely, trusted, and contextualized information between local media, public health and humanitarian agencies, and communities.

WHAT IS A RUMOR?

A rumor is a currently circulating story or report of unverified information collected from firsthand sources within the community which could take the shape of a question, criticism, concern or a general comment on a situation or topic. A rumor can be tricky because it might have some element of truth in it.

WHY RUMORS?

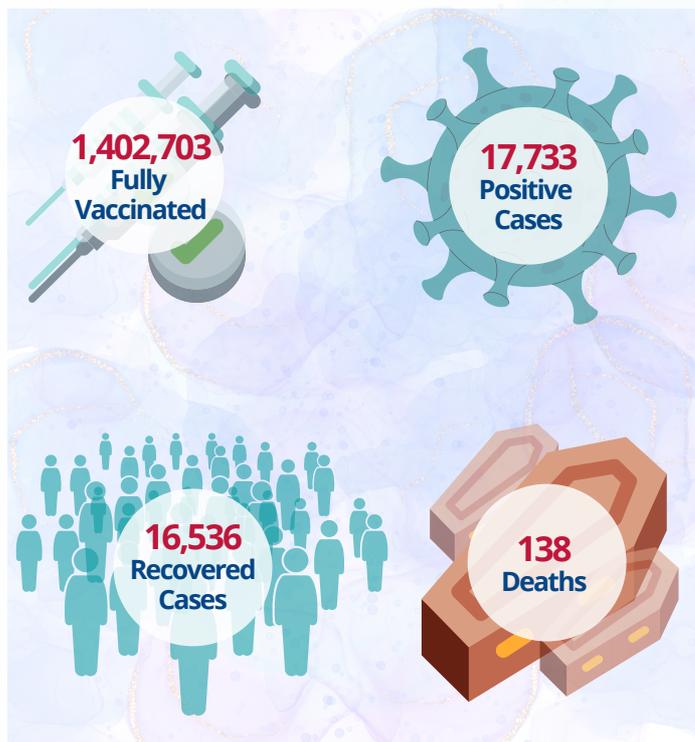
In the absence of information that responds to the concerns and reality of communities rumors thrive and become believable by the communities in which they are circulating. Rumors shape public perception and can be harmful if not countered in a timely and consistent manner. Rumors thrive because of lack of relevant and contextualized information that is rooted in our target communities and can tell us a lot about where the community is at and what they need. Community health workers, local community leaders and associations should provide the community with information as well as recommendations and credible and reliable sources that can help them navigate the risks of misinformation



COVID-19 Situation Update

On 30th June 2022, South Sudan registered **17,733 positive cases**, **16,536 recovered cases** and **138 deaths**. This is reported by the national Ministry of Health in South Sudan https://moh.gov.ss/daily_updates.php

Cumulative Summary of Statistics for June, 2022



Source: Ministry of Health, South Sudan

Risk Rating: Risk is measured based on a range of factors including a) cultural relevancy, b) timing, c) online engagement, d) the believability of a rumor, and most importantly, e) the potential negative impact a rumor may have on the health, well-being, and safety of local communities or service providers.

- **HIGH RISK:** A rumor that is very likely be believed among the larger community with potentially severe negative impacts resulting in serious harm to an individual or group including inciting violence or creating widespread fear/panic. High risk rumors may encourage widespread avoidance of testing/treatment or harm towards health workers and other service providers.
- **MEDIUM RISK:** A rumor that has the potential to be believed among the larger community with potentially moderate negative impacts to a community or individual's health wellbeing, or safety. Medium risk rumors may have a moderate impact on health seeking behaviors.
- **LOW RISK:** A rumor that is either unlikely to be believed among the community or with limited negative impacts to a community or individual's health, well-being, or safety or to the pandemic response

WHAT ARE PEOPLE SAYING?

QUESTION:

Can children be vaccinated?

Theme: COVID-19 vaccines question
Risk Rating: Low

FACT CHECKING:

Luo Benz, WHO National COVID-19 vaccine technical officer stated that **“several studies have proved that persons of all ages are at risk of contracting COVID-19 disease, but mainly a certain group (the elderly, persons with other underlying diseases) are at a higher risk of developing severe form of the disease, or at worst become hospitalized or even die from COVID-19”**. Adding that it is for this reason that South Sudan adopted a policy to vaccinate 18 years and older - first to save lives. For now, children are not a priority to get vaccinated because there is no evidence to correlate COVID-19 infection and death in them. This may change in the nearest future due to the evolving variants of the virus.

Mrs. Mary Denis Obat, Director of Health Education and Promotion at the National Ministry of Health stated that **“Children can be vaccinated but we don’t vaccinate children for now because we haven’t reached our target population of those from 18 years and above. We are relying on WHO guidelines and therefore the country isn’t ready to start vaccinating children”**.

Recommendation

COVID-19 vaccine awareness needs to be strengthened focusing on the target groups with explanation as to why children are not included as targets currently in South Sudan. Debunking COVID-19 Misinformation as to why children are not targeted for vaccination through messaging in local languages can improve uptake.

RUMOR:

Masks cause infection to pregnant mothers

Theme: COVID-19 prevention
Risk Rating: Medium

FACT CHECKING:

Dr. Brendan Dineen, WHO COVAX Coordinator stated that “facemasks are made up of materials that have been examined for safety. There are two types of masks; one that can be reused and another that can't be reused. The non-reusable is only used once because it cannot be washed based on the nature of its material. The common ones for the public are made of cloth and a filter. This one can be used again and again but on daily basis, it MUST BE WASHED. Proper wearing of masks is also very important. Masks are therefore safe and have saved a lot of people including pregnant women from getting infected with COVID-19 virus”.

Mrs. Mary Denis Obat, Director of Health Education and Promotion at the National Ministry of Health added that **“facemasks are designed to protect people from getting infected with COVID-19 and they do not have any chemical, people should follow COVID-19 guidelines which includes wearing of facemasks, keeping social distance, washing hands with soap and running water and using your elbow while sneezing”**.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>

Recommendation

The Updated Ministry of Health COVID-19 Guidance (July 2022) strongly advises citizens to use mask in public places especially in health facilities. Therefore, the communities must be encouraged to wear facemasks in public. There is also a need to encourage government officials to put on facemasks during public events to avoid being questioned by some people why they don’t practice what they preach.

Everyone aged 2 years or older—including passengers and workers— should properly wear a well-fitting mask or respirator when indoors or while using public transportation (such as airplanes, trains, buses, ferries) and transportation hubs (such as airports, stations, and seaports), especially in locations that are crowded or poorly ventilated.

ADVICE:

People should follow Covid-19 guidelines.

Theme: COVID-19 Protection
Risk Rating: Low

FACT CHECKING:

Luo Benz, WHO National COVID-19 vaccine technical officer said that “yes, it is still important that even if you have been vaccinated, you should follow the guidelines. People who are vaccinated can still get infected with COVID-19, but because they are already vaccinated, they cannot experience a severe form of the disease or they will not, therefore, be hospitalized, nor will they die from the disease – personal protection.

However, they can still transmit the infection to any other persons, and if those persons are not yet vaccinated as is the case in South Sudan, there are chances that they could get the severe form of the disease, be hospitalized, or even die from it. It is therefore very important that even after we are vaccinated, we should regularly wash hands with soap and clean water, properly wear masks, and ensure social distance to save others who may not have been vaccinated yet”.

<https://www.who.int/westernpacific/emergencies/covid-19/information/transmission-protective-measures>

Recommendation

All the institutions involved in creating awareness should emphasize the protective measures to make sure that communities are able to stay safe from the virus. More messages on COVID-19 protective measures.

For more information, call the toll-free number 6666. For more information visit, <https://moh.gov.ss/>

The Rooted in Trust 2.0 project works to combat COVID-19 rumors and misinformation, responds to the information challenges faced by vulnerable groups, encourages open dialogue between citizens and stronger collaborative partnerships between information providers.

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USAID-BHA Rooted in Trust 2.0 South Sudan

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