



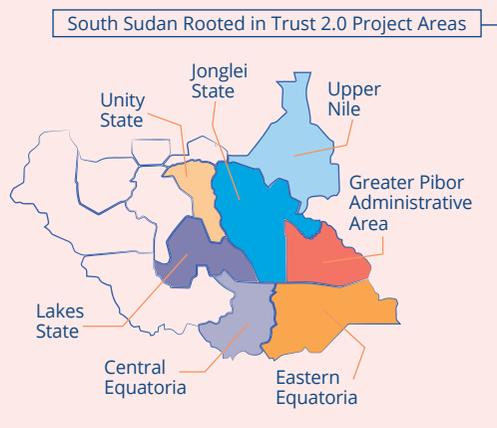
LUGARA

HUMANITARIAN BULLETIN

This Humanitarian Bulletin has been reviewed by the South Sudan Ministry of Health

ABOUT THE BULLETIN

This bulletin is produced by Internews in South Sudan to provide an analysis of community feedback, rumours trends and inform humanitarian and health organizations with practical recommendations on how they can better respond to the community rumours and concerns around COVID-19, COVID-19 vaccines, and other health and non-health community concerns across the country. This bulletin not only explores community feedback and concerns but also sets out to facilitate effective two-way humanitarian communication and close the feedback loop on humanitarian and health programming.



INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT

The Internews Rooted in Trust 2.0 (RiT 2.0) project is a global pandemic information response program funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA). Besides South Sudan, the RiT 2.0 project is being implemented in 12 other countries namely Lebanon, Mali, Colombia, Sudan, Brazil, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Afghanistan, Zimbabwe, Haiti, Madagascar, and Yemen. The project aims to counter the unprecedented scale and speed of the spread of rumours and misinformation on COVID-19, COVID-19 vaccines, and other health-related topics. The Lugara Humanitarian Bulletin is an output of such work. For more information, please visit: <https://rootedintrust.org/>

HUMANITARIAN AND HEALTH OVERVIEW (FEBRUARY 2023)

In January 2023, people in South Sudan continued to suffer deteriorating humanitarian conditions — driven by conflict, a surge in sub-national violence, worsening food insecurity, continued climate crisis and ongoing public health challenges. Some 9.1 million people in the country, reflecting more than two-thirds of the total population, are estimated to need humanitarian assistance in 2023. An estimated 6.31 million people continued to experience high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above) in January, including 33,000 people in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) in Akobo and Fangak, Jonglei State and in Pibor County, the Greater Pibor Administrative Area. **Source:** South Sudan Humanitarian Snapshot (January 2023), OCHA, published on 22 Feb 2023. **LINK**

Health authorities in South Sudan have been responding to an ongoing measles outbreak since January 2022 to date, with 4,339 suspected cases including 388 (8.9%) laboratory-confirmed cases and 46 deaths (case fatality ratio: 1.06%) reported across the country. The current outbreak may have serious public health impacts due to the low national level of measles immunization coverage, which is below the expected 95% coverage to interrupt the ongoing transmission. Other factors include the most affected age group being those under five years old, and the country context where there are armed conflicts, food insecurity and internally displaced people favoring transmission. **Source:** Measles – South Sudan - World Health Organization (WHO). **LINK**

METHODOLOGY

For this bulletin, Internews in South Sudan analyzed a total of 187 statements collected between February 1- 28, 2023. These statements were received from five RiT 2.0 Feedback collectors working in five states in South Sudan namely: Upper Nile, Unity, Central Equatoria, Eastern equatorial and Jonglei states.

During the period, the methods utilized to collect community feedback and runout data include Key Informant Interviews (KII), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), face-to-face interactions, social media listening, and monitoring. In addition, State Risk Communication, and Community Engagement (RCCE) focal persons have started reporting through the unified rumour tracking tool.

The analysis of the rumours was done by the Information Management Officer and the findings were discussed at an editorial meeting to select the frequent and high-risk rumours. Feedback data collected was coded thematically and those statements that were the greatest threat or high-risk to the communities were selected and shared below.

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THE MOST PRESSING COMMUNITY CONCERNS

Feedback #1

“**If you have [human immunodeficiency virus] HIV/AIDS, you just need to go to the fishing islands. The mosquitoes feast on your blood and while you eat fish on daily basis, the virus will eventually go.”**

Rumour heard from Jonglei State, South Sudan.

FACT FILE

According to WHO, the above rumour and claim are false. “The community needs continuous awareness on HIV/AIDS among other health conditions. Six common means of HIV transmission in South Sudan is heterosexual (male-female or female-male) contact, prenatal (mother to child) transmission and other includes blood transfusions, or injection drug use. Eating fish doesn’t in any way protect you from acquiring HIV nor providing treatment for HIV,” said **Dr Moses Mutebi Nganda, WHO Medical Officer, HIV and Hepatitis, Republic of South Sudan.**

The HIV targets an infected person’s immune system and weakens a person’s ability to fight off infections and some types of cancers. There is no cure for HIV, however, antiretroviral therapy (ART) suppresses the virus in infected people thus reducing the risk of spreading/sheading the virus. People who have HIV and are taking ART cannot transmit HIV to their sexual partners. HIV can be diagnosed through rapid diagnostic tests and home tests

and confirmed through laboratory testing at a health center. It is important to be tested if you have been exposed through one of the key transmission routes. **Source:** WHO. 2022. “HIV.” November 9, 2022. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/hiv-aids>.

Feedback#2

“**COVID-19 is a replacement for HIV/AIDS because HIV/AIDS is obsolete and there’s a need by scientists to mess up the world with a new scary disease than HIV.”**

A rumour heard from Juba, Central Equatoria State.

FACT FILE

According to WHO South Sudan, HIV is a major problem in the country. “About 11,000 South Sudanese acquire HIV every year, so it’s not obsolete,” said **Dr Nganda.**

HIV continues to be a major global health issue. In 2021, 650,000 people died from HIV-related causes and 1.5 million people acquired HIV. Globally, an estimated 38.4 million people are living with HIV, and 25.6 million or a third of the total population are in the WHO African region.

While ART drastically reduces the chances of transmission of HIV, it depends on taking it consistently/regularly to stop the spread of HIV. Advanced HIV disease remains a persistent problem in the HIV response. “People continue to present or re-present for care with advanced immune suppression,

putting them at a higher risk of developing opportunistic infections.” **Source:** WHO. 2022. “HIV.” November 9, 2022. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/hiv-aids>.

Feedback #3

“**Does Hepatitis B infect children only?”**

Feedback heard from communities in Bentiu, unity state ,South Sudan.

FACT FILE

According to the WHO South Sudan expert, hepatitis infects all groups. “Hepatitis B just like HIV is acquired mainly through mother to child (90-95%), and others that include heterosexual transmission, blood transfusions, male-male contact, or injection drug use. So, Hepatitis B infects all age groups but mainly from mother to child during pregnancy, childbirth, and breast-feeding period,” said **Dr Nganda.**

Hepatitis B is a virus that attacks the liver and can cause acute or chronic liver disease. There is no treatment for Hepatitis B. To stop the spread of the virus, WHO recommends that all children receive the hepatitis B vaccine and the use of antiviral prophylaxis for the prevention of hepatitis B transmission from mother-to-child. **Source:** WHO. 2022. “Hepatitis B.” June 24, 2022, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/hiv-aids>.

187 Number of community feedbacks collected in February 2023.

Internews RiT 2.0 South Sudan Project Milestones and Achievements (September 2021- February 2023)

The RiT 2.0 project was launched in September 2021 and the project implementation ended on February 28, 2023. The project recorded several milestones and achievements that contributed to the national COVID-19 and other health emergency responses.

RiT 2.0 South Sudan project targets and partners

The project worked with broadcast and social media partners in Central Equatoria, Upper Nile, Eastern Equatoria, Unity State and Lakes State. The media partners included, The Radio Community (TRC), Voice of Reconciliation (VOR), DefyHateNow, Community Engagement Network (CEN) and Advance Youth Radio (AYR).

Community Feedback Collection & fact checking

The project in partnership with media houses and story grantees did offline and online feedback collection using methodologies which have been tried and tested by Internews.

- RiT 2.0 through its partners collected a total of 6,071 COVID-19 and other health-related concerns.
- In-person feedback collected totaled 5,333 while 348 were collected online. Another 66 feedbacks were collected through the RCCE unified rumour tracking tool. The non-COVID-19 rumours were 308 and 16 were collected offline.

- Feedback that was collected from the communities through our partners was localized, contextualized, analyzed and fact-checked to ensure reliability, guide product development that responds to the community needs.

Bulletins, factsheets, and Multimedia products

- Between September 2021 and February 2023, RiT 2.0 produced a total of 466 products which include 28 Factsheets, 9 Humanitarian Bulletins and 365 radio programs.
- A total of 318 Multimedia products produced and shared including 16 social media placards, short films, videos, and music.

Small Story Grant fellowship

- The project also worked with five Small Story Grant fellows who produced recorded programs, live talk radio shows, short films, music, and testimonials to highlight the importance of COVID-19 protection, vaccination, Ebola virus disease prevention and other health issues.
- The Story Grant fellows produced and disseminated 53 programs and products. These include 23 Short Recorded programs (12 Vox Pop & 11 PSAs); 15 testimonies, 14 Live talk shows, four Short films/videos and one song.

Research and reports

- Seventeen (17) reports were produced during the project period, including eight bi-weekly and nine monthly project reports.

- A total of five research works were carried out; one Information Ecosystem Assessment (IEA) Research among Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) communities, one IEA research among Persons with Disabilities; one Baseline Survey, one Media and Humanitarian Term Survey and a Training Needs Assessment among South Sudan Journalists.

Community and media engagement

The project had several in-person and online engagements which include five training courses, 51 listening groups, 359 social media listening, engagement, and products.

- Five information sharing roundtable events with religious, community leaders and women and youth association representatives. A total of 160 attended the sessions (90 Male and 70 female)
- Three media dialogue sessions were conducted in collaboration with the Ministry of Health (MoH), WHO and United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). At least 120 journalists benefited from the sessions.
- Two training courses provided for journalists on a) health Journalism 2) reporting on COVID-19 and Ebola Virus Disease (EVD). A total of 43 community correspondents, journalists, editors, and chairpersons of media associations benefited.
- Seventy (70) humanitarian, health actors, journalists attended a two-day collaborative workshop to develop national rumour tracking indicators and unified rumour tracking tool.



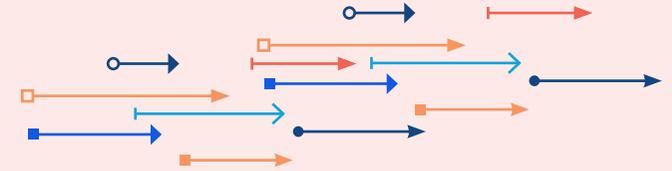
Coordination and Partnership

The RiT 2.0 project contributed to COVID-19 response through active participation, leadership role in coordination mechanisms as well as sharing analysis of feedback trends and collaborative work.

- Internews contributed as the leader for rumour tracking and management subcommittee, led the revision of terms of reference (ToR), development of unified indicators and community feedback collection tool.
- In collaboration with RCCE and partners, 70 humanitarian, health actors, journalists attended a two-day collaborative workshop to develop national rumour tracking indicators and unified rumour tracking tool.
- The project regularly updated the RCCE working group on community feedback and rumour trend analyses.



Rooted in Trust



Internews RiT 2.0 Project Way Forward **2023 and Beyond**

The project in consultation with health, humanitarian actors, based on journalists training need assessment and desk review of relevant documents decided to mainstream other health and humanitarian issues in the feedback collection, product development and other activities. Accordingly, Internews plans to expand to thematic areas like climate change, social cohesion, and a wider range of health issues in the next project period.



CONTACT DETAILS

For more information about COVID-19, please
call the toll-free number 2222
or Visit <https://moh.gov.ss>

If you want to contribute to or provide feedback
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