



Lugara Media Factsheet

#2

South Sudan
March 2022



Rooted in Trust 2.0 Project Areas

- Central Equatoria
- Eastern Equatoria
- Jonglei State
- Unity State
- Lakes State

Greater Pibor Administrative Area

The Internews Rooted in Trust 2.0 project in South Sudan is funded by USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID-BHA). It aims to respond to rumors, misinformation, and fake news that shape negative public perceptions towards COVID-19 response in the country.

USAID-BHA Rooted in Trust 2.0 South Sudan. If you want to contribute to or provide feedback on this Lugara Media Factsheet or have information to share, please contact:

Tusiime Wilfred Romeo
(atusiime@internews.org) or
Dr. Michael Gubay,
(mgubay@internews.org)

This Lugara Media Factsheet is made possible by the support of the American People through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

About This Lugara Factsheet

This Media Factsheet is a periodic response to rumors and concerns about COVID-19 and provides verified information for journalists and community correspondents reporting on the pandemic. It is meant to provide information that is essential to understand the facts about the virus, vaccines and related issues, to help journalists respond to their audiences' questions, address rumors, and close the feedback loop.

A lot of information is circulating across South Sudan and beyond its borders about COVID-19, vaccinations and related issues. So, it is important to know what's true and what's not.

WHAT PEOPLE SAY?

Rumor #1 COVID-19 General



"Is COVID-19 a disease of urban people which affects people living in towns and cities?"

Focus Group Discussions,
Jonglei State,
South Sudan

Fact File

- ✓ This claim is false. ***"There is no scientific basis for the rumor that COVID-19 is only for town people. COVID-19 affects people in towns and villages. While the disease may spread less rapidly in the less crowded rural areas, it eventually spreads to all parts of the country. Hence, all eligible persons, irrespective of where they live should get vaccinated,"*** Dr. Phionah Atuhebwe, Regional New Vaccines Introduction Officer for Africa, Brazzaville Congo.
- ✓ South Sudan Ministry of Health weekly data indicates that COVID-19 cases are reported consistently from both urban and rural areas. For instance, 4,936 persons were tested in Juba between March 13th to 20th 2022 and 54 were confirmed positive cases. In the same period, 297 people tested for COVID-19 in other states around South Sudan and 43 were confirmed positive. **Source: Covid-19 (moh.gov.ss).** The statistics provided by the Ministry of Health South Sudan indicate that the infection rates are higher in the other states other than Juba City.



Rumor #2

Vaccines and Death

WHAT PEOPLE SAY?



"Can Covid-19 vaccines cause death to people some years after being vaccinated?"

Focus Group Discussions,
Jonglei State,
South Sudan

Rumor #3

Vaccines and Sexual Reproduction

"People say COVID-19 vaccines may reduce sexual performance."



Advance Youth Radio
Listener in Juba,
South Sudan.

Fact File

✓ This is a false rumor that was addressed by South Sudan Ministry of Health. "COVID-19 vaccine doesn't affect sexual desire or sexual performance. There is no

record that COVID-19 vaccines affect sexual reproductive health or have caused infertility in women and men. Hence, there is no reason to think the vaccine would affect sexual performance," Mabior Kiir Kudior, Chief of Planning and Information at Public Health Emergency Operation Centre, Ministry of Health, Republic of South Sudan.

✓ According to Dr. Phionah Atuhebwe, Regional New Vaccines Introduction Officer, "Billions of doses of the COVID-19 vaccines have been administered globally, and there are no reports that sexual performance is affected. The data on the safety of all WHO Emergency Use Listed vaccines is carefully reviewed and continuously monitored. Thus, there is no scientific evidence to prove this claim."

✓ Currently there is no evidence that any vaccine, including COVID-19 vaccines, causes fertility problems (problems trying to get pregnant) in women or men. COVID-19 vaccination is recommended for people who are pregnant, trying to get pregnant now, or might become pregnant in the future, as well as their partners. **Source: Center for Disease Control (CDC), <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/facts.html>**

Fact File

✓ This is a false rumor that was debunked by the World Health Organization (WHO). "There is no theoretical reason why the vaccine would kill anyone after vaccination. All the COVID-19 vaccines that have received WHO Emergency Use Listing are known to be safe and there is no scientific basis for the rumour that the vaccine will kill people after some years or so," Dr. Phionah Atuhebwe, Regional New Vaccines Introduction Officer for Africa, Brazzaville Congo.

✓ According to South Sudan Ministry of Health, 551 health facilities are conducting COVID-19 vaccination in 80 counties of South Sudan. A total of 487,602 persons were fully vaccinated in South Sudan as of March 23, 2022, which represents 3.9% of the total population. The COVID-19 vaccines are rigorously tested and monitored and deemed safe for controlling the pandemic. Serious adverse effects and deaths related to the vaccine are very rare. COVID-19 vaccines are safe, and they can help in:

- Reducing your risk of infection or spreading COVID-19
- Protecting against COVID-19 variants
- If you still get COVID-19, reducing your risk of getting seriously ill or dying from COVID.



Tips for Journalists

- ✓ In order to localize this story for your audience, seek confirmation not only that the rumor is active in your region, but also interview a local expert to confirm the actual situation (*for instance, to confirm that rates of Covid-19 in rural areas are the same [or perhaps higher] as they are in Juba*). Try to collect your own confirmation in addition to the official statements we have provided.
- ✓ Another way to localize this story would be to conduct vox pops (*person on the street*) interviews with randomly selected people, to ask if they have heard the rumor, and what do they think of the rumor. If you find that no one on the street has ever heard the rumor, you might want to think again about whether this IS a news story for you. Journalists need to be careful not to spread the rumor in the process of reporting on it.

Facts for South Sudan Journalists to improve their knowledge, reporting techniques and background checks about COVID-19.

- ✓ COVID-19 vaccines have been tested in large, randomized, controlled trials that include a broad range of people of all ages, all sexes, different ethnicities, and those with known medical conditions. The vaccines have shown a high level of efficacy across all sectors of the population. For more on the safety of COVID-19 vaccines, see Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety/safety-of-vaccines.html>
- ✓ As of 12 January 2022, WHO has evaluated and approved the following vaccines against COVID-19 for meeting the necessary criteria for safety and efficacy: AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine, Johnson & Johnson, Moderna, Pfizer/BioNTech, Sinopharm, Sinovac, COVAXIN, Covax, and Nuvaxovid. Visit <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/covid-19-vaccines/advice>. The AstraZeneca/Oxford and Johnson & Johnson vaccines are the only two brands of COVID-19 vaccines being administered in the Republic of South Sudan.

Key Links and Resources:

More information and stories by WHO on the safety of COVID-19 vaccines:

<https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/safety-of-covid-19-vaccines>

South Sudan Covid-19 cumulative data is found on South Sudan – WHO Coronavirus Dashboard. <https://covid19.who.int/region/afro/country/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.

USAID-BHA Rooted in Trust 2.0 South Sudan. If you want to contribute to or provide feedback on this Lugara Media Factsheet or have information to share, please contact: **Tusiime Wilfred Romeo** (atusiime@internews.org) or **Dr. Michael Gubay**, (mgubay@internews.org)