In July 2022, Internews collected 636 rumors, misconceptions, and community concerns on social media about the COVID-19 pandemic and vaccines in Sudan. The rumors were collected via listening groups with the participation of people impacted by conflict and displacement in eight states in Sudan, including Blue Nile, South Kordofan, Kassala, Al-Gedaref, East Darfur, West Darfur, Central Darfur, and North Darfur. Rumors were also collected from social media sources most commonly used in the country (Facebook and Twitter) and were selected through a risk analysis that identifies misinformation that may potentially impact vulnerable people, which are the target communities of the Rooted in Trust Sudan project.

Rumors that fall under the endemic theme highlight perceptions that COVID-19 is endemic, and is no longer a concern. Hoax rumors say that COVID-19 is not real, while vaccines safety are rumors questioning the safety of COVID-19 vaccines. Transmission rumors represent the believes that says COVID-19 can not be transmitted in Sudan due to hot weather or infects older people only. Treatment rumors represent the local remedies that people believe can treat COVID-19, like the Acacia.

Internews and its Rooted in Trust partners, collected a total of 636 COVID-19 and vaccine rumors, including 356 rumors collected during listening group sessions, while 280 rumors were collected from social media.

We aim to tackle misinformation and rumors about the pandemic and vaccines, to engage and support humanitarian, public health and media actors in responding to vulnerable communities’ COVID-19 information needs.

Please visit: Internews Sudan COVID-19 Rumor Bulletins
Rumors questioning the effectiveness and safety of the COVID-19 vaccines are common on Sudanese social media, with some saying the Monkeypox virus is merely a side effect of the COVID-19 vaccine. Others have also expressed outright fear of the vaccine, saying "We are afraid of the side effects". While some have dismissed the vaccine, citing their natural immunity to the virus because of their dark skin color, Sudan’s hot climate, and being “African”.

In Sudan, many rely on herbal remedies to treat a COVID-19 infection. They are considered an essential and trusted treatment, as some of these home-based remedies have been passed down through generations. A man in Abu Karshola, South Kordofan, explained that they rely on “thin corn and red corn” in their diet for protection because the COVID-19 vaccine is “harmful”. While others rely on various remedies to treat COVID-19, such as “acacia”, “balanitis oil” “bitter tea”, “ginger”, “raw donkey milk” and “tamarind juice”.
HUMANITARIAN SITUATION REPORT - JULY 2022
SOCIAL MEDIA LISTENING AND COMMUNITY FEEDBACK ON COVID-19 AND VACCINES

In July 2022, people expressed fear of taking the COVID-19 vaccine, saying it can kill the vaccinated person after a certain period of time or can cause “paralysis” or “stroke.” While 20 women and 27 men shared during listening groups that the vaccine can lead to infertility, miscarriages, cause birth defects for newborns, and reduce sexual drive. Also, 99 out of a total of 636 rumors collected on social media and from participants of listening groups said COVID-19 is a hoax. For example, a woman in Dabanga camp in Ad Du’ayn, East Darfur shared: “There is no corona, it is used for political gain for the purpose of making money.” Others downplay the pandemic by referring to COVID-19 as a “common cold.”

The majority of the rumors were shared by men, both online and through face-to-face listening groups.

Despite high risk rumors being the lowest, they require our immediate response because of their potential harmful impact on people.

The majority of the rumors collected in July 2022, expressed apathy and indifference regarding COVID-19, with some downplaying the pandemic, and others pointing out that COVID-19 treatments are readily available, like herbal remedies. Some rumors expressed fear of a COVID-19 infection, because people do not want to become separated from their family and community. However, the majority of the rumors expressed fear of the COVID-19 vaccine because of the harm they believed it would cause, such as miscarriages, severe illness, and even death.

Please visit: Internews Sudan COVID-19 Rumor Bulletins
We welcome your feedback and suggestions. Please contact: Mayada Mahdi, Information Management Officer, mibrahim@internews.org