The Sudan Rooted in Trust Project (RiT) aims to address COVID-19 rumors, perceptions, and misinformation by collecting and analyzing rumors found on Sudanese social media, and through listening groups with communities affected by conflict.

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 about COVID-19 and the vaccines.

This community bulletin is based on an analysis of 397 rumors collected in Arabic and Angasana languages, between 13 December 2022 and 22 January 2023, from Facebook and Twitter, and through face-to-face listening groups with communities affected by conflict and displacement in Al-Gedaref, Central Darfur, East Darfur, North Darfur, West Darfur, South Kordofan, and Blue Nile States.
This is the thematic breakdown of 397 rumors collected in Arabic and Angasana between 13 December 2022 and 22 January 2023, from Facebook, Twitter, and through listening groups with communities affected by conflict and displacement in Al-Gedaref, Central Darfur, East Darfur, North Darfur, West Darfur, South Kordofan, and Blue Nile States.

60% of rumors about COVID-19 and vaccines have been shared by men on social media and during listening groups.
This is an analysis of the emotions expressed in 397 rumors in Arabic and Angasana between 13 December 2022 and 22 January 2023. Internews found that 46% of the rumors expressed feelings of apathy and indifference. This was prevalent mostly among rumors downplaying the pandemic saying that COVID-19 is a hoax, and sharing homemade/herbal remedies to treat COVID-19.

COVID-19 and Vaccine Rumors Based on Risk Level

- Low Risk: 81.9%
- Medium Risk: 17.1%
- High Risk: 1%

Rumor risk breakdown based of 397 rumors collected in Arabic and Angasana between 13 December 2022 and 22 January 2023.
This is a breakdown of 68 rumors collected during listening group sessions held IDP and refugee camps in Arabic and Angasana between 13 December 2022 and 22 January 2023. Internews found that 50% of the rumor data was collected from El-Shaheed Afandi Camp in Blue Nile.

**Sudan COVID-19 Statistics**

As of 31 January 2023, the official COVID-19 statistics rose to 63,742 confirmed cases and 5,001 COVID-19 deaths.

As of 12 December 2022, a total of 10,504,568 persons were vaccinated with at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine in all states of Sudan, while 8,302,878 people have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19, accounting for 20 percent of Sudan's population.

In December 2022, statistics of vaccination have been updated for the first time since May 2022, revealing a leap of around 5 million administered doses during that period, bringing the total to 13,711,970 vaccine doses.
RUMOR #1

“These young children if they get Corona we will buy a new plate with cumin and sesame and the child is thrown to the top of the hut and when he screams Corona leaves him”

*Man - Age: 36-45 – West Darfur - Kulbus*

Throwing infants from rooftops is dangerous, and is not a cure for any illness, including COVID-19. Babies and young children are not only prone to injury by such actions but falling from a high rooftop could result in their death. COVID-19 is caused by a virus, and there is no proof that throwing young children on top of rooftops will treat or prevent COVID-19 infections. In addition, it's physically and emotionally harmful to the child. It is important to follow the preventative measures and guidelines provided by medical professionals and not rely on dangerous remedies.

Compared to adults, children are at a lower risk of becoming infected by COVID-19, and when they do contract the virus they're mostly either asymptomatic or experience mild symptoms. But there have been some exceptions, where children have experienced severe illness due to COVID-19, including a few COVID-related deaths.

It is important to always give children the proper care, protection, and medical attention when they are sick, and to avoid relying on remedies that could be harmful and damaging to our children. If your child is experiencing any of the COVID-19 symptoms, such as fever, cough, shortness of breath, headaches, and body ache you can seek medical attention for your child by visiting the nearest health center.

For more information about COVID-19 and how to care for the little ones when they're sick, parents can call the national pandemic hotline at 9090 to speak to a healthcare worker.
RUMOR #2

“If a person gets Corona cut him with a razor and slap him with wet red sand”

Woman - Age: 26-35 - West Darfur – Kulbus

There are no available treatments for COVID-19 in Sudan. Cutting your skin with a razor is dangerous and will not treat the virus; rubbing wet red sand into freshly cut skin will only contaminate the wound and cause an infection.

**Bloodletting** is removing blood from a person as a treatment for medical conditions. Until the late 19th century, bloodletting was practiced in different parts of the world and was believed to cure any disease including fever, asthma, pneumonia, or menstrual issues.

Bloodletting may involve cutting a vein or an artery. In most cases, bloodletting isn’t only ineffective, but can also be life-threatening. One of the biggest health risks of bloodletting is blood loss. This practice also poses a great risk of infections and sepsis, without even adding red clay to the cuts, which could lead to a non-healing wound, tetanus, or gangrene, among many other health risks.

Performing such practice for treating COVID-19, would put the person at grave risk of developing a serious illness. The best way to protect yourself from COVID-19 is by getting vaccinated. Since the launch of COVID-19 immunization programs two years ago, the vaccines have been proven to be effective and safe in protecting us from developing severe COVID-19 illness and preventing hospitalization and death.

If you or your loved one becomes infected with COVID-19 you should isolate yourself from other family members if possible, monitor your symptoms, and if they become more severe you should refer to the nearest health facility.

If you have any questions on how doctors treat COVID-19, you can call the pandemic hotline at 9090.
“Endrin pesticide prevents from Corona”
Woman - Age: 26-35 - Central Darfur – Zalingi

There is no proof that toxic pesticides like Endrin can stop COVID-19 infections, and no one should use Endrin as a cure for COVID-19, or any other disease.

Pesticides are used to kill insects and other pests; however, they do not prevent COVID-19, which is a respiratory disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. In addition, irresponsible use of pesticides, such as Endrin, is extremely dangerous and can result in major health risks.

Since 1991, the Endrin pesticide has not been manufactured or used in the United States because of its harmful effects on animals, such as migratory and nontarget birds. In addition, Endrin has been found in soil particles, it can also end up in groundwater, meaning it can get into the water we drink. It has also been observed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that Endrin accumulates in fish and other aquatic animals, and it can also enter rivers, lakes, or streams by rainfall.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, exposure to high Endrin levels can cause Endrin poisoning. This can trigger convulsions, jerking of legs and arms, twitching facial muscles, sudden collapse, or even death.

Since COVID-19 mainly spreads through air, the best way to protect yourself against the virus is by following the COVID-19 preventative guidelines set by the Ministry of Health, such as wearing a mask, practicing good hygiene like washing your hands regularly, physical distancing, and ensuring proper ventilation during social gatherings like opening windows or gathering outdoors, and avoiding close contact with people if you are feeling sick.

It is also important to rely on credible sources of information such as the Ministry of Health and the World Health Organization for accurate information about COVID-19 and how to stay protected.
“Anemia people don't get Corona because they have boosters”

Man – Age: 26-35 – Al-Gedaref – Al Galabat

This is not correct, anyone is at risk of getting COVID-19, regardless of their health status. Anemia is a health condition in which a person's red blood cell count is below normal. Red blood cells carry oxygen to different parts of the body, when red blood cell count is low, a person may experience weakness, exhaustion, and shortness of breath. There are many causes of Anemia, some of them include loss of blood, lack of iron, or vitamin B12 deficiency.

A study published by the American National Center for Biotechnology Information aimed to evaluate the relationship between anemia and COVID-19. The research included 222 confirmed COVID-19 patients, of which 79 were anemic and 143 did not have anemia. The study showed that people with anemia were more likely to develop severe COVID-19 illness. In addition, the study also found that having Anemia made it harder for the body to fight off the virus. Therefore, the study concludes that Anemia is an independent risk factor for severe illness in COVID-19 infections.

This is why it is important to take extra precautions to protect yourself against COVID-19 infections if you are anemic. In addition to following the preventative measures set by the Ministry of Health, such as wearing a mask or a face covering in public and washing your hands with water and soap (when available), you can follow a healthy diet that is rich in iron, vitamin B12, and folate to help reduce the risk of anemia.

Taking the COVID-19 vaccine provides the best protection against severe illness if you get infected with the virus. To find the nearest vaccination center please call the pandemic hotline at 9090.
RUMOR #5

“We are farming people we don’t know something called the hospital but if someone gets it we bathe them with red salty water”

Man – Age: 36-45 – West Darfur - Kulbus

Red salty water might have some benefits to the skin, circulatory system, or even to muscles and joints, but it cannot cure a COVID-19 infection.

There are no globally approved treatments for COVID-19, however, some countries have approved certain treatments for the virus, such as the US and UK. It is worth noting that these treatments are not available in Sudan. COVID-19 is a viral disease with a diversified list of mild to severe symptoms, such as fatigue, headaches, and shortness of breath. Potential long-term effects include neurological aftereffects or lasting inflammation and damage to the heart muscle. With scarce treatment options, the use of herbal or home-based remedies have been popularized around the world.

According to a recent systematic review, the reliance on supplementary or complementary therapies derives mainly from the positive attitudes and beliefs that are associated with effectiveness and safety. Although improvements in psychological or physical symptoms could be attributed to herbal or readily available remedies in some cases, the study found that these alternative treatments are not a cure for the virus. Additionally, some alternative remedies may not be safe to consume.

There is no definitive method or remedy for the prevention of COVID-19 infections except getting vaccinated and following preventive measures recommended by the Ministry of Health, which can reduce the chances of getting infected. Getting vaccinated can also reduce the risk of severe COVID-19 illness, hospitalization, and even death. Wearing a face mask when in crowded areas or when feeling ill, and socializing outdoors are some of the measures we can adopt to protect ourselves and loved ones from contracting the virus.
So far, there are no globally approved treatments for COVID-19, but vaccines are available all over the world. However, some countries have approved certain medications for treating COVID-19 patients, but these drugs are not available in Sudan.

For example, the American FDA has authorized treatments for those who have been hospitalized for COVID-19. These medications are used to slow down the progress of severe illness for those who are at a higher risk, such as people with diabetes and heart disease. In the UK, the National Health Service provides treatments for COVID-19, including antiviral medications, such as remdesivir, nirmatrelvir, and ritonavir. These medications are used to manage the symptoms of COVID-19 and reduce the risk of severe illness.

There’s a difference between COVID-19 treatments and COVID-19 vaccines. COVID-19 treatments are given to those who have already contracted the virus to help recover and manage symptoms. On the other hand, vaccines are used as a preventative measure, vaccines work by training our immune system to fight off the virus if we get infected.

So far, 10,504,568 people have been vaccinated against COVID-19 in Sudan. The vaccines can aid in preventing severe illness, hospitalization, and even death from COVID-19. In addition, vaccines also help in protecting the people around you, especially people who are at a higher risk from the virus such as older people and those with underlying health conditions. In Sudan, the Ministry of Health is offering four COVID-19 vaccines, including AstraZeneca, Pfizer BioNTech, Sinopharm, and Johnson & Johnson.

To find a COVID-19 vaccination center in your area please inquire at the nearest healthcare facility or call the national health hotline at 9090.
"When you say you have Corona they isolate you and this is not good for us"

Man – Age: 26-35 - East Darfur - Ad Du'ayn

Isolation and quarantine are important because they help stop the virus from spreading to other people. When a person tests positive for COVID-19, they may be isolated in a hospital if they become severely ill, or at home to ensure that this deadly virus does not spread to others. This helps in limiting the virus' ability to spread and infect other community members.

At the start of the pandemic, Sudan implemented quarantine measures for people who have been in close contact with COVID-19 patients or who have recently traveled to areas with high rates of infections. These measures are intended to help slow the spread of the virus and to protect the community.

Although these important preventative health practices are not mandatory in Sudan, we must follow the recommended measures to protect ourselves, our families, and our communities. Each one of us has a personal responsibility to self-isolate from others when feeling sick as it is essential for you to rest and recover, without the risk of spreading the virus to others. If isolation is not possible for any reason, consider wearing a face mask while in public, practicing physical distancing from others, washing your hands regularly with water and soap (if available), and minimizing contact with others as much as possible.

It is important to note that COVID-19 can cause severe illness and death, especially in older adults, pregnant women, and people with underlying health conditions, such as kidney failure and diabetes. By following the preventative measures set by the Ministry of Health and the World Health Organization, you can help in protecting yourself and your loved ones from the virus. Seeking a COVID-19 vaccination while continuing to follow the preventative measures, offers the best protection against the virus.
What are Rumors?

Rumors are currently circulating stories or reports of uncertain truth 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. We should also note that rumors can be tricky to tackle because they might carry some element of truth.

RESOURCES
TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT COVID-19 AND THE VACCINES

MINISTRY OF HEALTH FACEBOOK PAGE
SUDAN COVID-19 MOBILE VACCINATIONS
ADVICE FOR THE PUBLIC ABOUT COVID-19

COVID-19 Hotline - Serving all areas of Sudan: 9090

How Are Rumors Collected?

Questions, comments, and misconceptions about COVID-19 were collected by Internews’ analysts, who compiled and assessed feedback gathered from Sudanese social media and through face-to-face listening groups with displaced people and communities impacted by conflict. The rumors, perceptions, and misinformation identified have been assessed to be the most prevalent or damaging to the health response. The selection was based on the level of engagement and its potential impact on the community.

We welcome your feedback, questions, and suggestions.
Please contact:
Mustafa Omer - Data Analyst - momer@internews.org