

LUGARA

MEDIA FACTSHEET

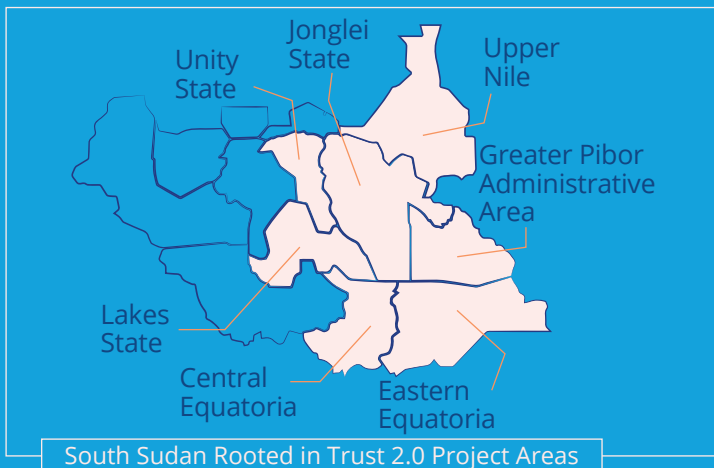


This Media Factsheet has been reviewed by the Ministry of Health, South Sudan

ABOUT THE FACTSHEET

This Media Factsheet is a periodic response to rumors and concerns about COVID-19 and Ebola Virus Disease (EVD), 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.

USAID-BHA ROOTED IN TRUST 2.0 SOUTH SUDAN



ABOUT THE PROJECT

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 and Ebola Virus Disease preparedness and response in the country.

If you want to contribute to or provide feedback on this Lugara Media Factsheet or have information to share, please contact: Tusiime Wilfred Romeo (Akiiki) (atusiime@internews.org) or Dr. Michael Gubay, (mgubay@internews.org)

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A lot of information is circulating across South Sudan and beyond its borders about COVID-19, vaccinations, HIV and hepatitis, and related issues. So, it is important for Journalists to know what's true and what's not; and provide factchecked information to the community.





Feedback #1

“If you have 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.”

Rumor heard from South Sudan

Fact File

According to World Health Organization (WHO), the above rumor 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, male-male contact, 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, World Health Organization (WHO) Medical Officer, HIV and Hepatitis, Republic of South Sudan.

The human immunodeficiency virus (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 people infected and reduces 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/critical 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.”

Rumor heard from Juba, Central Equatoria State

Fact File

According to WHO South Sudan, HIV is a major health issue in South Sudan. “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 Anti-Retroviral Treatment (ART) drastically reduces the chances of transmission of HIV, it depends on taking ART consistently/regularly stopping 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 South Sudan

Fact File

According to 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, 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>

KEEPING THE COVID-19 STORY ON THE NEWS AGENDA: SPECIAL FOCUS AS THE RIT 2.0 PROJECT CLOSURES OUT.

Three years into the coronavirus's deadly spread, most governments have lifted restrictions, many people have returned to work, masks have been abandoned and social distancing has become a thing of the past. Pandemic fatigue, for many, has set in and in most parts of the world the perception is that life has returned to normal.

Yet, public health experts have insisted that the pandemic is not over. One clear example is the surge in the COVID-19 infections in China at the end of December 2022.

Indeed, COVID-19 pandemic is not over. But there is optimism that the pandemic crisis may be ending. However, journalists are being challenged with finding new angles and hooks for the COVID-19 story. Some editors may feel the story is tired and are reluctant to take pitches from journalists.

Here are some ideas on topics to follow to keep the story on the news agenda.

- Variant: to counter myths that the pandemic is over, journalists can interview public health experts, doctors at the Ministry of Health and the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) team. Find out what variant is dominant in South Sudan and consult the WHO's variant tracker for the latest information.
- New vaccines: the development of new vaccines is an important story to follow as it is likely your audiences want to know whether they will be protected from variants now and in the future. Read and report on current research, interview public health officials on the implications of new vaccines and the future of vaccine development.
- Therapeutics: find out what treatments are available in South Sudan and if the most updated drugs and therapeutics are being used? If not, why not?
- Long COVID: get to know this field of reach by reading the latest studies and information. Interview members of the community who have ongoing symptoms months after infection. How are they coping? What is being done to care for them? Have any recovered? Interview health officials and doctors in South Sudan. This is a story that will be around for years to come.
- Vaccine equity: is there adequate COVID-19 vaccine supply across South Sudan? If so, are people getting vaccinated? If uptake is low, what is the government doing to increase demand? What is the government doing about vaccine hesitancy? Are vaccines being used within their expiry date? Have vaccines expired, if so, why have they not been used? All these questions and more will keep your audiences updated and ensure accountability for the health of citizens.
- mRNA vaccine technology in Rwanda: In June 2022, German vaccine manufacturer Pfizer BioNTech partnered with the Rwandan government in building the first mRNA vaccine production plant in Kigali, Rwanda. This is a key story for journalists in South Sudan to follow. Journalists can ask questions like: "When will the Rwandan factory be completed? Why is it important?"
- Pandemic preparedness: Interview public health experts and doctors on actions required to mitigate diseases outbreaks. What are the gaps in health system in the country? what is being done to solve problems? Are there enough trained health staff? Is routine immunization up and running or are there vaccine stock outs? What is the government doing to prepare for future pandemics?

TIPS FOR SOUTH SUDAN JOURNALISTS IN HEALTH REPORTING

It is recommended that South Sudan Journalists take note of the following to improve their knowledge, reporting techniques, and background checks about COVID-19, hepatitis, measles and related reporting.

1. South Sudan journalists must prioritised reporting about infectious diseases like COVID-19, HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, cholera and measles; their preventive measures; surveillance; and immunization campaign in the country.
2. Journalists should understand the basics of the disease, and the background of the situation, the affected areas and have well-researched information. The media should educate the public to take actions that save life.
3. The journalists must use reliable, relevant sources when reporting about health emergencies in the affected communities to ensure accracy in their coverage. Besides, journalists must use updated, accurate data from reliable sources in the county health department, state and national ministries of health or from humanitarian health organisations in South Sudan.

KEY LINKS AND RESOURCES

1. What did the COVID disinformation teach us about the next pandemic? <https://internews.org/blog/op-ed-covid-misinformation-can-teach-us-how-to-respond-to-the-next-pandemic/>
2. Keeping the COVID-19 story on the news agenda <https://healthjournalism.internews.org/resource/keeping-the-covid-19-story-on-the-news-agenda/>
3. Global progress against measles threatened by the COVID-19 pandemic <https://www.who.int/news/item/10-11-2021-global-progress-against-measles-threatened-amidst-covid-19-pandemic>
4. More reading about hepatitis: <https://www.who.int/health-topics/hepatitis>

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

USAID-BHA Rooted in Trust 2.0 South Sudan If you want to contribute to or provide feedback on this Lugara Community Factsheet or have information to share, please contact: Peter Sokaom Daniel Atem (datem@INTERNEWS.ORG), Tusiime Wilfred Romeo (Akiiki)(atusiime@internews.org) or Dr. Michael Gubay (mgubay@internews.org)



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