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INTERNEWS COVID-19 MEDIA BULLETIN
Reporting on COVID-19 in South Sudan

Lugara

ISSUE #02

This bi-weekly bulletin is designed for and by media partners, journalists and other interested stakeholders in South Sudan reporting and working on COVID-19, and other related health and development challenges. It shares citizen concerns on COVID-19 and the humanitarian response, provides verified information about health measures of the Ministry of Health and partners and profiles trustworthy (re)sources.

August 20, 2020

SITUATION UPDATE

COVID-19 pandemic and response in South Sudan:

South Sudan's government is exploring how and when places of worship will reopen (Source: CGTN Africa). Current "hotspots" (areas with where COVID-19 transmission was officially reported by public health officials) include Central Equatoria, Abyei, Upper Nile, Jonglei State (Source: Ministry of Health, Sitution Update Issue # 24). Humanitarian partners report "community transmission" and fear that the virus is spreading without it being noticed by health officials. This, they state can overwhelm the health system, and increase mortality (Source: GOAL).

The Doctors' Union of South Sudan has reportedly advised against reopening of places of worship without clear guidelines on COVID-19 prevention (Source: Eye Radio).

Worldwide, Africa is accounting for 5% of all COVID-19 cases (source: Africa CDC), whilst the case numbers across the continent are still increasing (Source: Our World In Data). On the continent more than half of the officially reported cases are in South Africa (59%). Kenya and Central African Republic (CAR) are also reporting more confirmed cases than South Sudan, also whilst Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) are reporting less (Source: Our World In Data, and the graph on the right).

According to the South Sudan Ministry of Health, 1,211 people (or around half of the cumulative confirmed cases) have recovered from the virus since the beginning of the pandemic (Source: MoH). Many survivors of COVID-19 report that they suffer from the effects of the illness for long after, including from shortness of breath, muscle weakness and flashbacks (Source: NYT). "Stigma" against survivors and their family members has also been reported across South Sudan (source: WHO). People that are suspected of having COVID-19, or confirmed patients, are discriminated against, and/or experience loss of status because of getting ill (Source: WHO).

Case count & stats

South Sudan

Cumulative cases: 2,490

New cases:	Deaths:	Recovered:
+72	47	1,290

Source: *PHEOC, Ministry of Health, South Sudan.*

Africa

Cumulative cases: 17,928,698

New cases:	Deaths:	Recovered:
+1,800,515	687,011	834,262

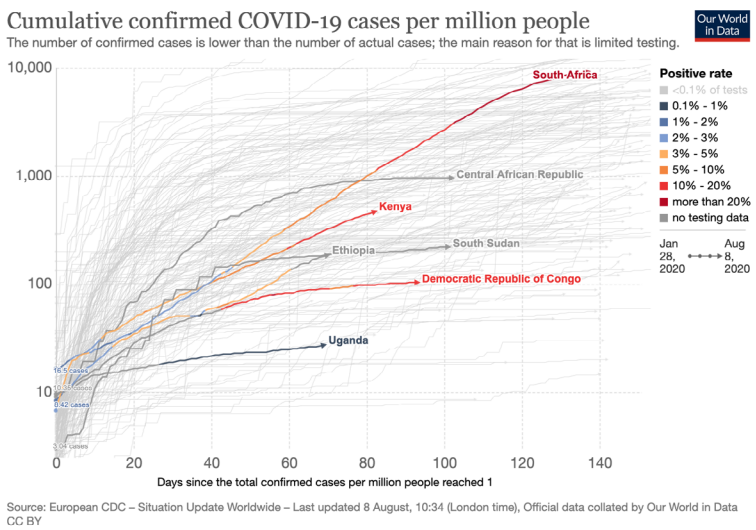
Source: *CDC Africa.*

Global

Cumulative cases: 21,516,760

New cases:	Deaths:	Recovered:
+19,706,736	766,663	14,568,432

Source: *World Health Organization & Statista.*



If you want to contribute to this media bulletin or have information to share, please contact:
Akiiki Tusiime, **atusiime@internews.org** or Dr. Michael Gubay, **mgubay@internews.org**
Internews welcomes feedback, comments and suggestions from all media receiving this newsletter and invites all of them to forward, share and re-post this newsletter as widely as possible.

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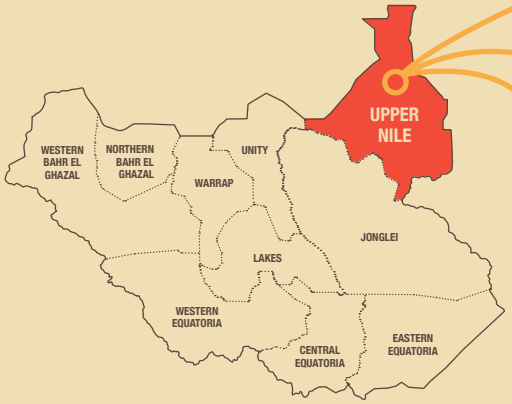
IN FOCUS

What are we hearing in Upper Nile?



"Our children travel to get work because the schools are closed because of COVID-19. When will the schools reopen?"

Heard at the market, Bunj, Maban

"There are rumors in the community about new cases in Malakal PoC, but there is no prove (read: that COVID-19 is spreading in the community). Can we test people randomly and take the result to Juba for further clarification, to know how many people affected by the virus?"

Male, 71-year-old man, Malakal

"Can WHO please provide testing kits to prevent the pandemic from getting out of control? The absence of testing kits will make it worse".

Male, 31-years-old, Malakal

Testing cases:

Testing on COVID-19 happens by taking a "swab" from a person's nose and throat (see a demonstration video on how testing on a person works – source: KTN TV). A healthcare worker gently sticks a cotton swab in a person's nose and mouth, and afterwards sends the test to Juba. In Juba, a lab technician in the Dr John Garang Infectious Diseases Unit analyses the swab.

Testing "contacts" can show how many people are ill in a community. However, testing all people that show signs and symptoms can also be expensive and challenging, as it needs trained health workers, transport, and laboratory equipment which is not always available (Source: MoH, Situation Update, August).

Where tests are unavailable, WHO recommends people with mild illness to stay at home as to not infect others, and call health providers when they feel worse. Most patients have mild illness and can recover at home without medical care. It is vital that the sick person drinks lots of fluids and rests (source: CDC).

Schools:

UNICEF and UNESCO have been appealing to the South Sudan government that schools should be reopened immediate, stating that the damage is done to children forced to stay home outweighs the risk of catching the virus (Source: VOA). UNESCO's education chief stated that: "an estimated 2.2 million South Sudanese children are not attending school, and the longer schools stay closed, the less likely it is that children will return to the classroom". (Source: VOA). Save the Children also calls to review COVID-19 measures on school closure as violence against children surges (Source: SCI).

When schools are to be reopened, the WHO and UNICEF recommend that is done in a safe manner. There are guidelines that set out the different prevention measures that are to be taken as children may still transmit the virus. WHO reports that the role of children in transmission is not well understood. To date, only few pandemics involving children or schools have been reported. The small number of pandemics reported among teaching or associated staff also suggests that spread of COVID-19 within educational settings may be limited (Source: WHO).

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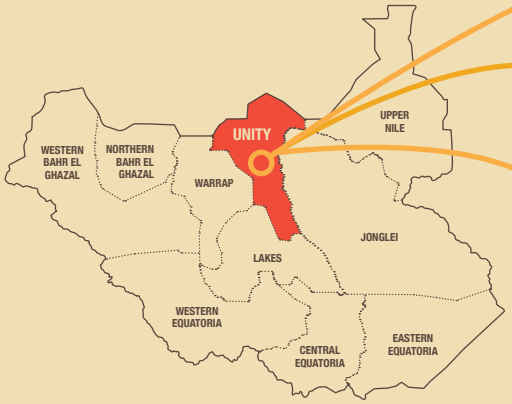
IN FOCUS

What are we hearing in Unity?



"If you catch COVID-19, then you will remain infertile. That is why girls should get children right now".

Male adolescents, Jamjang.

"Please provide radios for elderly so they can listen to messages airing about COVID-19 prevention measures".

Elders, Sector 2, Block 6.

"I want schools to be open so that my children can study"

Woman, 37 years old, Rubkona town

Elderly and COVID-19

Older people have been hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. A study with elderly people from Help Age in Juba, for example, showed that more than half of all older people have difficulty in accessing health services. This is concerning given many older people have at least one health condition and many are disabled. Almost half of the older people surveyed cannot leave their homes due to the COVID-19 sitution. More than 1 in every 3 elderly people states that they are too scared of contracting the virus to leave their homes. More than half of all surveyed older people feel anxious or worried all the time.

It is important for family members, especially the youth to protect themselves and older people in the family from getting infected with COVID-19. Older people, and people of all ages with preexisting medical conditions (such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, lung disease, or cancer) appear to develop more serious illness more often than others (Source: WHO)

Infertility:

We don't have enough evidence available at the moment to be able to say for certain if the COVID-19 virus can cause infertility in men or women. COVID-19 is a new virus, and doctors don't yet know everything about the disease. A such, they are not sure about all the long and short-term effects of the virus on survivors.

To prevent from getting ill with COVID-19 it would be vital for people to follow the simple preventive measures for COVID-19 including avoiding going to crowded place; avoiding touching eyes, nose and mouth; making that you follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. It is also important to stay home and self-isolate even with minor symptoms such as cough, headache, mild fever, until you recover; and to wear a mask when going outside and in public places.

Make sure that you call 6666 when you or a loved one demonstrates signs and symptoms of COVID-19, difficulties breathing.

Media contacts:

- **Ben Small – Help Age**
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IN FOCUS

What are we hearing in Central Equatoria?

"I witnessed community members refusing to let their temperature be taken at the gate".

Male, PoC 3, zone J, block 1 (Juba).

"We need to know the difference in symptoms of corona virus and the other diseases - if someone has this symptoms he will just say that this is malaria".

40-year-old male, block E (Juba).

"They should test everyone that comes from outside the PoC camp for our safety".

28-year old female, block C (Juba).

Malaria vs COVID-19:

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, tiredness, and dry cough. Some patients may also have aches and pains, a blocked or runny nose, or sore throat. They also have a loss of taste or smell. These symptoms are usually mild and begin gradually (Source: WHO).

Malaria symptoms include fever, headache, and chills (Source: COVID-19 Expert Database). Children with severe malaria sometimes also develop one or more of the following symptoms: severe anaemia, difficulty breating or even cerebral malaria (Source: WHO).

Whilst malaria and COVID-19 share some symtoms they are different diseases because they spread in different ways. Malaria is spread by mosquitoes and COVID-19 is spread by respiratory droplets that we inhale through our nose or our mouth (Source: COVID-19 Expert Database).

Signs:

Malaria and COVID-19 share some symptoms, but not all. Additionally, there is a difference between fevers caused by malaria and those caused by COVID-19. Malaria fevers are "cyclical", this means that they come back in "waves", whilst fevers caused by COVID-19 do not occure in cycles.

The most common COVID-19 symptoms are: fever, dry cough and tiredness. Less common symptoms include: aches and pains, sore throat, diarrhea, conjunctivitis, headache, loss of taste or smell, a rash on skin, or discoloration of fingers or toes (Source: Nigeria Health Watch).

Malaria is not the same as COVID-19 and it is important that you do not self medicate on malaria drugs when you have any of the COVID-19 signs or symptoms (Source: Nigeria Health Watch). Please do alert 6666 or local health providers when you are concerned that you or a family member may have contracted COVID-19.

It is important that you get tested if you have a cough, fever, dry cough and difficulty breathing!

Media contacts:

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Capacity building opportunities:

Internews globally has published some useful resources for journalists working on the pandemic. This guideline for example, provides useful insights in reporting on a "second wave" and this resource provides critical guidance for journalists reporting on clinical trials.
You can find more from Internews, here.

Africa CDC has some useful multimedia sources which can be used in your reporting, see here. You can also request an interview with Infectious Disease Specialist part of Africa CDC Regional Collaborating Centre for Eastern Africa: **africacdcrcceast@africa-union.org**

The Poynter Institute for Journalists has a very useful daily COVID-19 briefing for journalists, please **sign up for here.**

The International Journalist's Network has some very useful resources for journalists working on the pandemic, including some tips for early-career journalists during the pandemic, here. Also see some useful "key quotes" that can be used to counter misinformation about COVID-19, here.

Pandemic Post

Juba - "It is a very hazardous time", says Paul Guatlak Tong, Team Leader for Internews' Boda Boda Talk Talk initiative at the United Nations (UN) House Protection of Civilian (PoC) site in Juba: "and so people here are very happy that we give them the details on COVID-19". He is pleased to report that since July 2020, Boda Boda Talk Talk is back in town!

Boda Boda Talk Talk is an innovative project set up by Internews in 2014 to help communities living in PoC sites in South Sudan to get better access to lifesaving information. With BHA/USAID funding the project is now transitioning toward providing critical support to the COVID-19 RCCE pillar by setting up a channel for the PoC population to raise questions and concerns about the pandemic.

Tong is relieved the initiative is pivoting to provide information about the pandemic. "There are many needs here", he says, and keeping up with public health measures in the overcrowded PoC may not always be too easy: "We are here to raise awareness about the virus, to encourage people to wear masks, and to keep on physical distance from others - to stop COVID-19".

During COVID-19 pandemic, Boda Boda Talk Talk will collect feedback on COVID-19 and the response measures from PoC residents in Juba. The team will use this data to produce broadcasts that respond to ever-changing information needs. So far they have produced broadcasts on social distancing, the correct use of face masks, handwashing, signs and symptoms of COVID-19, and the importance of checking people's temperature. For more information please contact ptong@internews.org.

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Frequently heard topics

FACE MASKS

"We don't have money to buy local face masks, can WHO help us with those masks?"

Respondents, Yusuf Batil refugee camp, Maban

"When people go to the funeral places / burial events without face masks, it may be difficult to prevent them from getting ill"

Woman, 42-years-old, Malakal

TESTING & TRACING

"Can the World Health Organization bring testing devices so we can test people coming from infected places?"

Residents of Kaya refugee camp, Maban

"The absence of testing kits is making the situation worse. People don't believe COVID-19 is really here"

Male, 31-years-old, Malakal

TREATMENT

"We heard that there are some affected people who say there is no treatment for COVID-19. Is that true?"

Community members, Bunj refugee

"Self quarantine in the PoC may not be working as people believe in traditional behavior (read: medicine)"

Male, 37, Juba PoC.

COVID-19 IS "DONE"

"Most people are still ignoring the virus."

Male, 35-years-old, Malakal

Health agencies stopped raising awareness about COVID-19. Is the disease disappeared or did doctors find a vaccine or treatment? What happened?

Residents of Gendrassa refugee camp, Maban

Project update:

Internews' media partners launched COVID-19 radio broadcast programming

On August 4, 2020 Internews launched the "Information Saves Lives" BHA supported radio programming on COVID-19. The meeting was attended by representatives from the media sector in South Sudan, including, a media network and three radio stations. During the event the partners discussed the project objectives and a guidance note setting our all relevant processes for the project.

Internews' project media partners will be producing COVID-19 broadcasts. The content of the radio programming will be guided by feedback analysis and will be broadcasted in a variety of formats (including PSAs, talk shows, call-in programs, debates, personal testimonies, expert opinions, drama and music). Media outlets will broadcast in English, Arabic and nine local languages. The project will involve media partners across 16 radio stations and targets at risk and COVID-19 affected communities residing in densely populated areas and PoCs in 9 States.

For more info contact Michael Gubay, Project Manager, mgubay@internews.org.