

# Media Bulletin #5

December 2020



The COVID-19 pandemic overturned many concepts and equations in the media sector and brought new qualitative changes in covering of health issues in the press. It brought attention to the professional requirements of improving media coverage. Healthcare workers are depicted in the media as fighters in the front line against COVID-19, defending the lives of millions of people around the globe. After all, healthcare workers are facing the risk of infection. As well, journalists have been quick to cover the emotional impact of the pandemic on local communities. Countless of stories are being shared of those who have lost loved ones, and those who have recovered from the virus as well. The mental health effects arising from fear and uncertainty due to the pandemic, coupled with the enormous material losses and social repercussions of the pandemic were felt everywhere.

In Sudan, the Rooted in Trust (RiT) project aims to mitigate and disrupt misinformation about COVID-19 by collecting and analyzing rumors on the Sudanese social media space. This bulletin is based on an analysis of 637 rumors collected in Arabic between 2 December and 17 December 2020, from Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and face-to-face discussions with community members from various areas around Khartoum.

## Humanitarian Stories



Addressing the impacts of COVID-19 from a humanitarian angle and spreading optimism and a positive outlook on life in the face of fear, anxiety and tension results in media stories that are both heart-wrenching and of humanitarian value. For more on bringing humanitarian views to media coverage of disasters, epidemics and wars, please visit: <https://institute.aljazeera.net/ar/ajr/article/862>

## Stigma and social rejection

*"My father died and was suspected of having COVID-19 during the first wave. When he died many people boycotted us, even some of the family stopped talking to us and didn't even call to offer their condolences. One of our neighbors even moved houses."*

Woman - Facebook

Even after losing a father or mother due to COVID-19, the family must prepare for a long battle against stigma associated with COVID-19. Infection is not a defect and working against stigma is important. It greatly impacts those that have contracted the virus, and their families. The first step in fighting stigma is to provide correct information and fight misleading news.





## Useful Contacts

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## Talking Point: Stigma and Social Rejection

Many people recover from the disease caused by COVID-19. Being infected with the new Coronavirus does not mean that you will be a carrier of the virus forever.

According to the World Health Organization, stigma can also be defined as a sign of shame, or rejection. Stigma may also lead to discrimination, and exclusion from participation in a number of different parts of society. The social stigma and discrimination that accompanies a COVID-19 infection can also affect people's dignity and self-confidence.

We can tackle stigma by correcting damaging and inaccurate information about the virus that can cause more harm to infected individuals and their families within our community. It is both our individual and collective responsibility to protect vulnerable members of our community, and as journalists we can create positive impact by correcting misinformation and calling out discriminatory behavior. Hateful and bigoted acts have no place within our communities.

For more information on social stigma: [Social Stigma: What you need to know](#)

Useful resources for journalists to combat fake news and misinformation: <https://misbar.com/about-us>

## Community calls for COVID-19 media coverage

*"We will not believe what is being said about COVID-19 in the Sudanese media ... because if COVID-19 exists, they should show images of infected people and death."*

Rejection and denial of the existence of COVID-19 is prevalent in Sudan. During face-to-face discussions with community members around Khartoum, Internews' partners found that some groups cited that lack of media coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic and its repercussions has influenced their perspectives. Such community insights raise a number of thorny questions about the methods used by the press and calls for a review of editorial priorities of decision-makers in media institutions.

### Talking Point: Corona does not infect low-income communities

"We are afraid of the people of Khartoum. They have Corona. We wear our masks if we are going to Khartoum."

Internews' partners in Sudan carried out face-to-face discussions in some of the outskirts of Khartoum to help understand community perspectives of the COVID-19 pandemic. They found that a number of rumors were circulating among these communities, who experience marginalization and poverty. Some of the rumors are entrenched in the idea that COVID-19 did not reach their communities and that the pandemic only exists in the center of Khartoum and the classy neighborhoods of the capital. Countless community members shared the view that COVID-19 did not exist in their neighborhoods.

**Fact:** COVID-19 does not differentiate between rich and poor, nor does it differentiate between race and gender, all of us can become infected with the virus. However, in most parts of the world, marginalized and low-income communities are most affected by the pandemic and its economic repercussions. Preventative strategies, like government-enforced lockdowns, directly affect the livelihoods of low-income families and conflict-affected people, and impose a heavier burden on these communities.

### Updated estimates of the impact of COVID-19 on global poverty



### Determinants of satellite news coverage of the Corona pandemic in the era of digitalization



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Please contact Internews' Media Liaison Officer Hassan Ahmed Berkia (hberkia@internews.org) for support and further information.



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