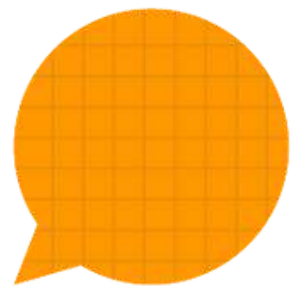


Humanitarian Snapshot

15 May 2022



Rumor Trend

"To the people who are still wearing masks, do they think that COVID-19 still exists?" Twitter, Man

"What is this new trend of taking pictures with these masks?? Didn't Corona stop? 🤔" Twitter, Man

“ These types of rumors and comments may stigmatize people who wear masks in public. Some social media users are saying that those wearing masks are either thieves trying to hide their identity, or they're unattractive people that are trying to cover up their acne. Others feel that masks are used to protect people from tear gas exposure during the demonstrations. ”



Why is this important?

- Internews social media listening activities reveal that for many we are in a post-pandemic era, while for others the virus is no longer a risk because it is endemic like the flu, and therefore masks and other protective measures against COVID-19 are no long necessary. These types of rumors appeared in April 2022, and all the comments and reactions to these rumors agree that currently people who are wearing masks are using them for personal reasons or motives that are not linked to protecting them from COVID-19. Stigmatizing the use of masks will discourage people from wearing them, which can lead to more COVID-19 cases in the country.
- By the end of 2022, upon WHO's recommendation, Sudan aims to vaccinate 70% of its population against COVID-19. Countries that have reached this vaccination target and witnessed a reduction in transmission rates and cases of severe illness from COVID-19, have eased their COVID-19 restrictions. As vaccination rates in Sudan remain at a low 14%, mask-wearing and other recommended measures are highly necessary to contain the virus, especially for people who have an underlying health condition, as it puts them at a higher risk of developing severe symptoms.

What can we do as humanitarians and public health responders?

Humanitarian actors and public health responders can use their social media platforms to emphasize that the pandemic has not ended and reiterate the importance of mask-wearing in the context of Sudan given the low vaccination rates. It is important to contextualize the use of masks at each stage of the pandemic response according to the official data in the country.

Humanitarian actors and public health responders can set an example for the public by diligently practicing the COVID-19 protective measures to help destigmatize mask-wearing and encourage others to do the same. The virus is airborne which means it can be transmitted through air when a person coughs, sneezes, speaks, sings, or breathes. So the best way to prevent and slow down transmission is to protect ourselves and others by practicing the preventative measures set by the Ministry of Health, such as wearing a mask in public, washing our hands with soap and water, and physical distancing.

Working closely with trusted sources in the community to raise more awareness on the importance of following the preventative measure set by the Ministry of Health and how it can help in ending the pandemic, and collaborating with the local media (tv, radio) to ensure the reachability of public health messages.