

Lugara Community Factsheet

ABOUT THIS FACTSHEET

The Internews **South Sudan Rooted in Trust 2.0** (RIT 2.0) project aims to address COVID-19 misinformation by collecting and analyzing rumors collected from communities and social media platforms in South Sudan. This **Lugara** Community Factsheet bulletin is based on an analysis of 45 rumors collected between December 1, 2021, to January 31, 2022. The rumors are collected from communities in the Jonglei, Unity, Upper Nile, and Central Equatoria states; and from social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter. This factsheet aims to help community health workers, outreach workers, community and religious leaders respond to prominent rumours and provide fact-based contextually relevant answers to their communities' questions and concerns.

WHAT IS A RUMOR?

A rumor is a currently circulating story or report of unverified information collected from first-hand sources within the community which could take the shape of a question, criticism, concern or a general comment on a situation or topic. A rumor can be tricky because it might have some element of truth in it.

WHY RUMORS?

In the absence of facts and relevant information, rumors thrive and become believable by the communities in which they are circulating. Rumors shape public perception and can be harmful if not countered in a timely and consistent manner. Community health workers, local community leaders and associations should provide the community with information from credible and reliable sources to help debunk the rumors using community-based education and during outreach work.

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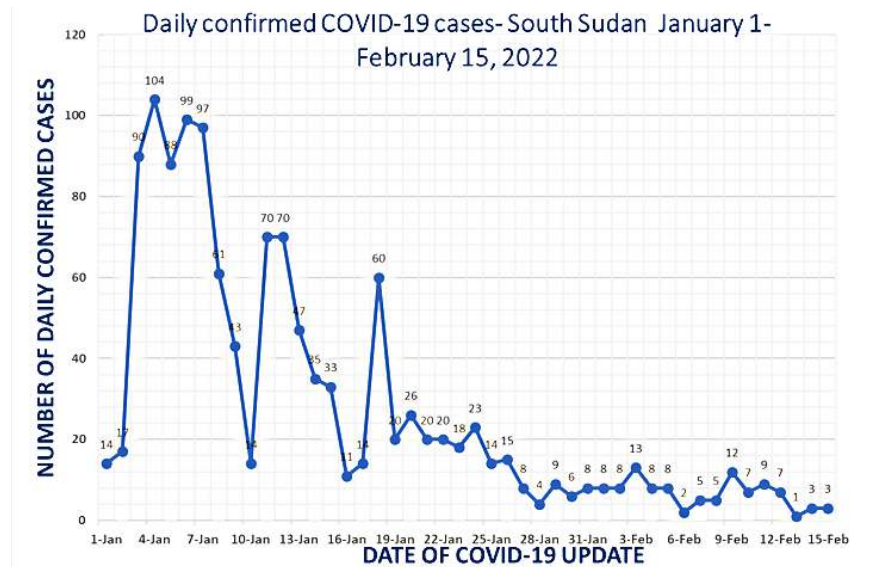
If you want to contribute to or provide feedback on this **Lugara Media Factsheet** or have information to share, please contact:

Tusiime Wilfred Romeo (atusiime@internews.org) or Dr. Michael Gubay, (mgubay@internews.org)



COVID-19 Situation Update

South Sudan witnessed a COVID-19 resurgence starting from mid-December 2021 to early January 2022. As of February 15, 2022, a total of 331,425 samples were tested for COVID-19. Of the total, 16,900 were confirmed cases and 137 deaths reported.



Source: Republic of South Sudan, Ministry of Health daily COVID-19 update

Risk Rating: Risk is measured based on a range of factors including a) cultural relevancy, b) timing, c) online engagement, d) the believability of a rumor, and most importantly, e) the potential negative impact a rumor may have on the health, well-being, and safety of local communities or service providers.

- **HIGH RISK:** A rumor that is very likely be believed among the larger community with potentially severe negative impacts resulting in serious harm to an individual or group including inciting violence or creating widespread fear/panic. High risk rumors may encourage widespread avoidance of testing/treatment or harm towards health workers and other service providers.
- **MEDIUM RISK:** A rumor that has the potential to be believed among the larger community with potentially moderate negative impacts to a community or individual's health well-being, or safety. Medium risk rumors may have a moderate impact on health seeking behaviors.
- **LOW RISK:** A rumor that is either unlikely to be believed among the community or with limited negative impacts to a community or individual's health, well-being, or safety or to the pandemic response.

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 providers.



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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE





WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING?

Rumor #1:

“Is Omicron just the nickname for the normal December flu?”-

**WhatsApp Group
South Sudan**

Theme: COVID-19 General
Risk Rating: Medium

FACT CHECKING:

According to Mrs. Mary Obat, the Director of Health Promotion Department and the Chairperson of COVID-19 Risk Communication and Community Engagement working group **“Most people with flu liked symptoms turn out positive for COVID-19 when tested. Therefore, anyone with flu liked symptoms should visit health facility for medical advice, screening and possible testing for COVID-19.”** The World Health Organization (WHO) on January 11, 2022,

also warned against treating COVID-19 as an endemic illness like flu, rather than as a pandemic. [https://www.who.int/news/item/19-01-2022-statement-on-the-tenth-meeting-of-the-international-health-regulations-\(2005\)-emergency-committee-regarding-the-coronavirus-disease-\(covid-19\)-pandemic](https://www.who.int/news/item/19-01-2022-statement-on-the-tenth-meeting-of-the-international-health-regulations-(2005)-emergency-committee-regarding-the-coronavirus-disease-(covid-19)-pandemic)

Influenza (flu) and COVID-19 are both contagious respiratory illnesses, but they are caused by different viruses. COVID-19 is caused by infection with a coronavirus first identified in 2019. The Omicron is a variant of Corona virus that causes COVID-19 which spreads more easily than the original virus that causes COVID-19. On the other hand, Flu is caused by infection with a flu virus that infects the nose, throat, and lungs. The seasonal flu is an acute respiratory infection most prevalent during fall and winter months. Both Flu and COVID-19 have some similarities and differences.

Similarities Between Flu and COVID-19

Flu and COVID-19 have some similarities. More information is described below:

- For both COVID-19 and flu, one or more days can pass from when a person becomes infected, to when they start to experience symptoms of illness.
- For both COVID-19 and flu, it's possible to spread the virus for at least one day before experiencing any symptoms.
- Both COVID-19 and flu can spread from person to person between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
- Both Flu viruses and the virus that causes COVID-19 can be spread to others by people before they begin showing symptoms; by people with very mild symptoms; and by people who never experience symptoms (asymptomatic people).
- Both Flu and COVID-19 illnesses cause many of the same signs and symptoms. You cannot tell the difference between Flu and COVID-19 just by looking at the symptoms alone. Testing is also important because it can reveal if someone has both the Flu and COVID-19 at the same time.

What is the difference between Influenza (Flu) and COVID-19?

More information about differences between flu and COVID-19 is available below.

- COVID-19 spreads more easily than Flu; and the virus that causes COVID-19 is generally more contagious than Flu viruses.
- COVID-19 can also take longer before people show symptoms, and people can remain contagious for longer periods of time.

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- If a person has COVID-19, it could take them longer to experience symptoms than if they have Flu. Typically, a person with Flu may experience symptoms anywhere from 1 to 4 days after infection.
- If a person has COVID-19, they could be contagious for a longer time than if they have Flu. Most people with flu are contagious for about 1 day before they show symptoms
- COVID-19 has been observed to have more superspreading events than Flu. This means the virus that causes COVID-19 can quickly and easily spread to a lot of people and result in continual spreading among people as time progresses.
- Compared to Flu, COVID-19 can cause more serious illnesses in some people.

Source: CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/symptoms/flu-vs-covid19.htm>

Symptom Check: Is it COVID-19 or the Flu?

COVID-19 and the Flu cause similar symptoms. The diseases can also cause no symptoms or mild or severe symptoms. Because of the similarities, it can be hard to diagnose which condition you have based on symptoms alone. However, there are a few differences as shown in the table below.

Symptom or Sign	COVID-19	Flu
Cough	Usually (dry)	Usually
Muscle aches	Usually	Usually
Tiredness	Usually	Usually
Sore Throat	Usually	Usually
Runny stuffy nose	Usually	Usually
Fever	Usually	Usually - not always
Nausea or vomiting	Sometimes	Sometimes (more common in children)
Diarrhea	Sometimes	Sometimes (more common in children)
Shortness of breath	Usually	Usually
New loss of taste or smell	Usually	Rarely

Source: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/in-depth/covid-19-cold-flu-and-allergies-differences/art-20503981>

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Recommendations for Communities

- Although Omicron has few symptoms like a common cold, COVID-19 is not a seasonal flu and should not be taken lightly. The Ministry of Health advises to observe the prevention measures to reduce the risk of infection and community transmission.
- Since COVID-19 and the Flu can be easily confused, the best practice to differentiate them is to get tested. In South Sudan, most testing facilities are in the capital city, Juba and there are few testing facilities in the other states. However, most of the state health facilities do screening tests using the RDT (Rapid diagnostic test). Anyone with flu-like symptoms can go to a health facility for a check-up, possible screening, or testing.

For any questions and concerns call toll free number **6666** or visit the nearby health center for clarifications and guidance.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING?

Rumor #2:

“Does vaccination cause infertility in child-bearing women? Can it stop one from having children?”

- Face-to-face conversation with a nurse at a private clinic in Juba



FACT CHECKING:

According to Mr. Emmanuel Moju the Deputy Director of health promotion department at South Sudan national ministry of health, “The rumor on infertility related to COVID-19 vaccines has been circulating since the roll out of the vaccine in South Sudan last year.

Theme: COVID-19 Vaccine **Risk Rating:** Medium

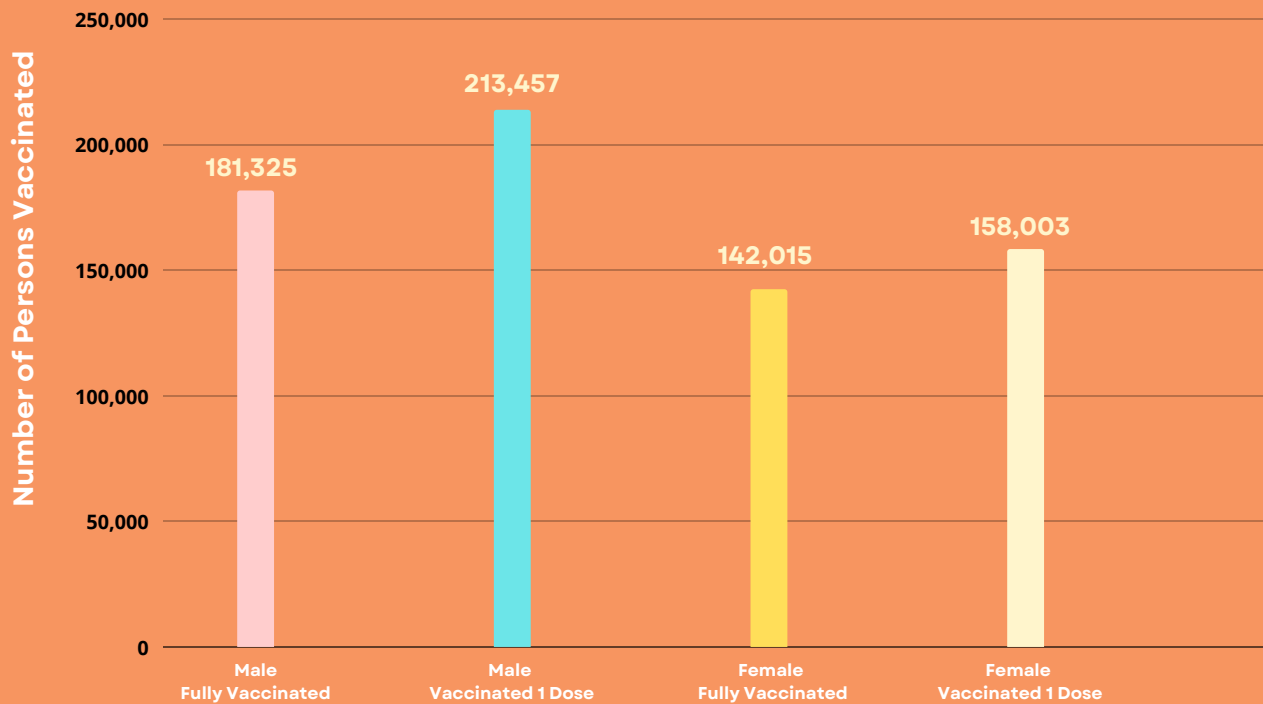
However, this is a false information, COVID-19 vaccine does not cause infertility”. WHO Epidemiologist also confirms **“The vaccines we give cannot cause infertility. This is a rumor that has gone around about many different vaccines and there is no truth to the rumor. There's no vaccine that causes infertility.”**

Source: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/media-resources/science-in-5/episode-24---vaccine-myths-vs-science>

In South Sudan, there is ongoing vaccination in all 10 states and 3 administrative areas; in 79 counties and 469 facilities. According to South Sudan Ministry of Health report, 323,430 people were fully vaccinated in South Sudan as of February 16, 2021. Of all these, 42.5% (142,105) were female while 181,325 were male. The proportion of females vaccinated has increased in the past months.

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Vaccine Uptake by Gender - South Sudan



Data Source: South Sudan Ministry of Health COVID-19 Vaccination Dashboard and Reports February 16, 2022

Recommendations

COVID-19 vaccines are available in all the counties' health facilities and can be accessed free of charge. Please go to the nearby facility to get vaccinated and protect yourself and your family from COVID-19.

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BE SAFE



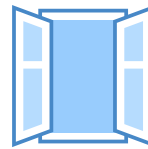
Vaccinate



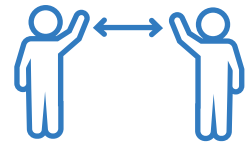
Wear A Mask



Wash Hands



Keep Windows Open



Physical Distancing

For more information call the toll-free number **6666**. For more information, visit <https://moh.gov.ss/>

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