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September 18, 2020

SITUATION UPDATE

Persistent misinformation and concerns

South Sudan continues to see a rise in the number of confirmed cases, with 2,555 confirmed cases, 1,317 recoveries, and 48 deaths, as of 14 September 2020 (Source: Ministry of Health).

Journalists in South Sudan report that misinformation and rumors around the COVID-19 outbreak and response mechanisms remain frequent. Some of the most persistent concerns include that “black people can’t get COVID-19”, that alcohol, herbal tea and onions can prevent people from getting ill with COVID-19, and that - which is highly relevant due to flooding across the country - “rain and flooding washed away COVID-19”. One third of all 150 unique feedback data points that Internews and partners collected across the country in the first half of September, contained misperceptions about COVID-19 and the response.

In the weekly COVID-19 situation report from 17-23 August the Ministry of Health in South Sudan reports that only 24 percent – which is roughly one in three cases - reported the typical signs and symptoms of COVID-19 (Source: Ministry of Health). This means that many people don’t show signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and may not notice that they are ill. As such, they can still spread the virus, as they don’t know they are ill. Doctors call such patients “asymptomatic cases” (Source: WHO). Normally, when people get sick from the coronavirus, it takes on average 5-14 days to develop symptoms that can range from mild to extremely dangerous (Source: Conversation).

Health officials don’t know yet how much of the COVID-19 has been spread worldwide by asymptomatic patients. However, reports from some countries suggest that asymptotically infected individuals are much less likely to transmit the virus than those who develop symptoms (Source: WHO). It is always smart to always wear a mask when in public spaces and to wash your hands frequently with soap and water. See more from IFRC’s Dr. Ben here.

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<th>South Sudan</th>
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<td>New cases:</td>
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<td>Source:</td>
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Guidance for Journalists Reporting on COVID-19 in South Sudan
September 18, 2020

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October 30, 2020

IN FOCUS
What are we hearing in Western Equatoria?

There is no corona. Before people have been dying of worse diseases like Ebola but we have never been told not to go to church or school. The government is just following what other countries are doing
Female, Ibba country

Corona is only killing the old people... For those who are young, they are strong, and they cannot be affected. In any case, people have been dying even before corona
female, Nzara Country

Corona is for the white people not Africans
female, Ezo county

Young people and COVID-19:

Older people and younger people can be infected by the COVID-19 virus (Source: WHO).

Young people are also dying from the COVID-19, stated the World Health Organization's chief scientist in an article of the New York Times. She warned against complacency toward COVID-19 in young people (Source: NYT). In particular, young people with pre-existing medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, and heart disease appear to be more vulnerable to becoming severely ill with the virus (Source: WHO). IFRC also warns that young people can die from the disease. People of all ages including infants less than 1 years of age have contracted COVID 19 and died from it (Source: IFRC).

WHO advises people of all ages to take steps to protect themselves from the virus, for example by following good hand hygiene and good respiratory hygiene (Source: WHO). IFRC also mentions: "If you are young and catch COVID-19 you may only get mild symptoms, but you can still pass the virus to your older relatives who are more likely to become seriously ill and die. By protecting yourself, you are also protecting your family, friends and loved ones".

Race and COVID-19:

COVID-19 does not see the difference between the race/ethnicity or other factors between people. Everyone can get COVID-19. While there’s no evidence that people of color have genetic or other biological factors that make them more likely to be affected by COVID-19 (Source: Mayo Clinic).

IFRC mentioned that "COVID-19 can affect everyone; men and women, young and old, and all races. The virus that causes COVID-19 has now spread around the world, and people from all continents have been affected, including Africans, Asians, Americans and Europeans”. Based on current evidence, it is clear that everyone can catch and spread the virus” (Source: IFRC).

Actually, there have been studies in the United States and other countries in Europe, that state that black people are more likely to get ill or even die of the COVID-19 virus (Source: The Conversation).

Concerns gathered by colleagues from Anisa Radio in Yambio - 29% of the feedback (total of 7 instances) was requesting change in delivery of services, 43% on misconceptions, and 14% on traditional cures and 14% on the use of face masks.

Media contacts:
Red Cross experts are also available for media interviews, and can be available to debunk common concerns and provide fact checked information:
Euloge Ishmwe +254 731 688 613 euloge.ishimwe@ifrc.org (based in Nairobi)
Stephen Ryan +353 85 725 4114 Stephen.RYAN@ifrc.org (based in Nairobi)
September 18, 2020

IN FOCUS

What are we hearing in Torit?

I believe COVID-19 does not exist because I don’t see people getting sick of COVID-19, it’s a big lie.
Inkas, female

Corona virus exist not only for the rich but for everybody.
male, Inkas

COVID-19 exist people should try by all means to protect themselves.
Hai Naivasa, female

COVID-19 does not exist:

IFRC states that: “Coronavirus is not spread intentionally in Africa” (Source: IFRC). COVID-19 is an infectious disease, which came from animals to us, humans. Nature is always producing new viruses, says IFRC, and “unfortunately this COVID virus is just another example of how clever nature can be” (Source: IFRC).

Not all people get ill when they get infected with the virus, as some people don’t even show the signs and symptoms of the disease (see the situation update on page 1). That people may not show the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 does not mean that the disease does not exist (Source: WHO).

If people don’t believe COVID-19 is real or can affect them, they won’t follow health measures like physical distancing and handwashing, and cases and deaths will keep rising (Source: IFRC). It may help to interview people who have recovered from COVID-19 so people believe the virus is real, and to interview trusted community members like religious leaders, youth (Source: IFRC).

COVID-19 exists not only for the rich but for everybody.

Catching COVID-19:

IFRC says that “COVID-19 has now spread to every country in Africa and cases are rising quickly so we should not wait until people are dying in our community before we believe the virus is real. It’s the actions we take now that will end this outbreak as quickly as possible” (Source: IFRC).

The aid agency also reports: “Just because you don’t know someone who has had COVID-19 does not mean the virus isn’t real. So far, we have been less affected in Africa than other parts of the world, but this is not a reason to relax or to think it’s not real - instead we should do everything we can to keep the number of cases and deaths as low as possible” (Source: IFRC).

We can all catch and spread COVID-19. There are cases in rural villages, in cities, amongst people who have never travelled, those who are rich and who are not, and those from all ethnic groups and religions. If you can catch a cold, you can catch COVID-19. This disease does not discriminate!

Media contacts:

• WHO gathers “mythbusters” and visual aids that can help you debunk rumors in the community. Download the images here.
• See a webinar form WHO and IDR and Mistrust and Denial during COVID-19 here.

Out of the 5 instances of feedback collected by colleagues from CRN’s Radio Emmanuel, 60% stated that it was important to protect yourselves, as COVID-19 is real, whilst 20% stated that COVID-19 did not exist and the other 20% reported on the signs and symptoms.
INTERNEWS COVID-19 MEDIA BULLETIN
Guidance for Journalists Reporting on COVID-19 in South Sudan

September 18, 2020

IN FOCUS
What are we hearing in Jonglei?

Coronavirus can’t survive in South Sudan because of hot temperatures
Malual Chaat, Bor

Coronavirus is a business of the government and not a disease
Malual Chaat, Bor

He said we understand that alcohol is used as a sanitizer to take away the virus. Can we drink alcohol as a way to protect ourselves from coronavirus?
Male, 40, Block 2, Bor

Alcohol:

No, drinking alcohol does not protect you from coronavirus infection (Source: WHO). Alcohol should always be consumed in moderation and people who do not drink alcohol should not start drinking in an attempt to prevent the infection (Source: WHO).

See a video with Dr. Ben from IFRC who talks about this rumor here.

Dr. Ben reports that: “this is definitely not true. Sorry. Drinking too much alcohol can actually make you sick and increase your chances of getting sick with COVID-19 as you have weakened your body. Alcohol and hand sanitizer are not the same. Rather than drink alcohol, just wash your hands frequently, and minimize your contact with other people”.

COVID-19 Business:

This is not true, in fact, South Sudan collectively and people individually across the board have suffered gravely from the pandemic. As the Sudd Institute has noted: “firms and individuals in South Sudan are going through severe economic stress” (Source: Sudd Institute).

IFRC mentions that “the COVID-19 pandemic has had a very negative impact on the global economy, as well as peoples’ health. It has heavily affected people’s ability to work and make an income, businesses have shut, there is limited travel and it has become harder to transport goods and services from country to country” (Source: IFRC).

The agency also says that: “governments and aid agencies may receive some funding from donors to respond to COVID-19, the amount of funding received is not enough to meet the needs or offset the losses caused by the damage COVID-19 has done to the economy”. (Source: IFRC).

Media contacts:

Sud Institute info@suddinstitute.org
https://www.suddinstitute.org/who-we-are/team/

Read more from the World Bank about the global impact of COVID-19 on the world economy here.

From the 36 feedback instances collected by the Voice of Reconciliation 98.4 FM, more than half (53%) were misconceptions, 17% were questions about response mechanisms including isolation and correct use of masks, with 14% about treatment and alternative medicine and 8% about complacency of response mechanisms.
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September 18, 2020

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IN FOCUS
What are we hearing in Lakes?

Survivors:

You don’t need to be scared to stay close with people who have recovered from COVID-19. When they left the hospital or home isolation, they are safe to interact with!

People infected with COVID-19 should stay at home for at least two weeks after symptoms disappear. Visitors should not be allowed until the end of this period (Source: WHO).

What should I do when I tested positive for COVID-19 but had no symptoms?

CDC says that “If you continue to have no symptoms, you can be with others after 10 days have passed since you had a positive viral test for COVID-19. People who are severely ill with COVID-19 might need to stay home longer than 10 days and up to 20 days after symptoms first appeared. Anyone who has had close contact with someone with COVID-19 should stay home for 14 days after their last exposure to that person”. (Source: CDC).

Traditional medicine:

As Africa CDC mentions: “herbal-based traditional medicines play a significant role in disease management in Africa and are widely used as alternative medicines”.

They also state: “There have been several declarations by institutions in Africa on the use of herbal-based traditional medicine for the prevention of COVID-19 transmission or treating people. Many of the claims are difficult to verify because of the lack of documented evidence”.

Africa CDC confirms: “currently, no herbal remedy has been validated for use to prevent or treat COVID-19”.

Media contacts:

• See some useful videos on isolation from the CDC here.
• See the statement of Africa CDC on traditional medicine, here.

From the 16 feedback instances collected by the CRN’s Good News Radio, one third of the concerns was about stigmatization of suspected and positive COVID-19 cases. Almost a third of feedback items (31%) were questions about transmission, and 15% states that they believe COVID-19 is real. Only 6% reported that COVID-19 did not exist, with 6% stating they were tired of COVID-19 response measures.
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September 18, 2020

IN FOCUS

What are we hearing in Central Equatoria?

Why is there no medicine for COVID-19?
Dar-es-Salaam, Juba

Can a person who is infected with COVID-19 be reinfected again?
concern shared in Gudele

People have right to say, COVID-19 can kill only elders’ people
female, 23

Reinfection:
The Centre of Disease Control reports: “At this time, we have limited information about reinfections with the virus that causes COVID-19. This is a new virus, and CDC is actively working to learn more. We will provide updates as they become available.” (Source: CDC).

They also state: “There are no confirmed reports to date of a person being reinfected with COVID-19 within 3 months of initial infection. However, additional research is ongoing” (Source: CDC).

They conclude in a media statement saying that: “The duration of infectiousness in most people with COVID-19 is no longer than 10 days after symptoms begin and no longer than 20 days in people with severe illness or those who are severely immunocompromised” (Source: CDC).

Media contacts:
See WHO’s instructional videos on home care below:
What to do if you have COVID-19  https://we.tl/t-LMLR497ijI
Caring for a family member with COVID-19  https://we.tl/t-LSDSfHyF0e

From the 71 feedback instances collected by partners in Juba – Boda Boda Talk Talk, Advance Youth Radio and Sama FM, most (44%) were on compliancy challenges with WATSAN measures and face masks, 14% on misperceptions, 14% requested change in aid delivery mechanisms, and 10% on food shortage, 11% on security related issues and 3% thanking humanitarian partners for their work.

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**The COVID-19 Beat Updates from the Media**

Advance Youth Radio has aired various call-in programmes about COVID-19, including a call-in show in which the hosts debunked common myths related to the COVID-19 outbreak on Wednesday 9 September (see [here](#)). One of the common myths was that black people are unable to contract the COVID-19 virus. The host also stated: “we have to raise awareness as young people”.

Sama FM spoke with the Ministry of Health about the importance of wearing masks in crowded places and discussed why denial on COVID-19 is dangerous. Additionally, the radio station, based in Bor, aired segments on how to protect the elderly and offered practical tips of what to do when you have a patient in the house. A debate was aired in which the radio host discussed challenges when calling the COVID-19 emergency call center.

In the Voice of Reconciliation’s (VoR) COVID-19 weekly radio bulletin the host speaks with visitors in Juba’s churches. He reports: “all the benches are full, and there is no space left... most of the worshippers don’t have masks on”. He also visited a Sunday school, where a worshipper told him: “They are praying hard to God that COVID-19 will disappear so people can go back to their normal lives”. The bulletin also addressed remote learning and safe school reopening during the pandemic, speaks with survivor, and shared practical tips from WHO on home care.

Boda Boda Talk Talk colleagues stationed at UN House interviewed various PoC residents who raised several questions around the importance of handwashing, the use of the hand-held thermal gun for measuring temperature (COVID-19), and how social distancing can be done within a crowded PoC environment.

The Association for Media Development in South Sudan has celebrated the successes of one of their MDI Alumni’s. Ms. Jennifer Nyling James who graduated from MDI/AMDISS in 2019 and reported from Bor on the flooding affecting the population in Jonglei, State. A photo of the reporter knee deep into water to catch a perfect shot went viral on social media and raised awareness for female reporters.

Adults and youth in a listening group in Bentiu PoC and Rubkona town appreciated The Radio Community for broadcasting COVID-19 preventive messages in the “Let’s Talk Cattle” program. “Let’s talk cattle program has challenged our life positively because it contains cattle life program and coronavirus prevention messages”, says Bentiu PoC trade leader Nihal Chan.
INTERNEWS COVID-19 MEDIA BULLETIN
Guidance for Journalists Reporting on COVID-19 in South Sudan

September 18, 2020

Frequently heard topics

COVID-19 does not exist/is a business 13%

COVID-19 can not kill/ survivor in hot climates/does not kill black people/does not kill young people 11%

Questions about signs and symptoms/transmission 9%

Use of face masks 11%

Traditional cures/alternative healing 5%

Questions about testing or treatment of COVID-19 patients - 2%

Appreciation for humanitarian partners - 1%

Concerns about isolation - 1%

Food shortage 5%

Complacency with COVID-19 measures 8%

Security concern 6%

Change requested in service delivery 9%

Protect yourselves, COVID-19 is real 5%

WATSAN challenges 10%

Stigmatization related to COVID-19 5%

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Also see the resources of the Maban RCCE TWG here, for further rumors and concerns.
September 18, 2020

Capacity building opportunities:

Video training from ICFJ: The International Center for Journalists (ICFJ), in partnership with the Facebook Journalism Project, has launched the Video Storytellers-Africa. The program features a six-week, self-directed course starting Sept. 21. The course will prepare participants to discover story ideas as well as shoot, script, edit, upload and distribute high-quality videos using a mobile phone. Storytellers who successfully complete the course may apply to participate in a mentorship program and compete for prizes of US$1,500. See more here.

UNOCHA COVID-19 Archive, South Sudan
UNOCHA has compiled all relevant COVID-19 documents for South Sudan, from the PHEOC, UN agencies and documents shared by the Ministry of Health within well-maintained google drive folders. This information can be accessed here and can be useful for your reporting and further investigations. See for example:

PHEOC - COVID-19 Documents
• COVID-19 SOPs (Archive)
• PHECO daily updates on COVID-19 in South Sudan (Archive)
• South Sudan COVID-19 NTF Communications

Contact List - National Steering Committee
• Contact List - National Steering Committee [COVID-19]
• Contact List - Incident Action Plan [COVID-19]

Project update:

Internews has now signed agreements with four more media partners in the BHA funded COVID-19 project and welcomes Capital FM, City FM, Eye Media, and The Radio Community (TRC). All partners have started production of radio bulletins, personal testimonies of COVID-19 survivors, vox pops, call-in programs, radio skits, debates, and public service announcements. The project will also soon expand to Renk and Melut where the team is starting Boda Boda Talk Talk projects like in Juba.


The team also continues to collaborate with RCCE partners and attends various RCCE meetings regionally, in country and globally.