

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 and responses. It also shares citizen concerns on COVID-19 and the humanitarian response.

December 04, 2020

SITUATION UPDATE

Vaccines, Masks and Wrestling Competitions

New findings from clinical trials of the COVID-19 vaccine are promising – recent results from Pfizer and Moderna showed that the vaccines were 95% effective in preventing COVID-19 infections. The Oxford vaccine, which is being developed in the United Kingdom, shows that the vaccine is effective and that perfecting the dose could increase protection up to 90%. This vaccine will be one of the easiest vaccines to distribute in South Sudan, particularly in countries with a tropical climate, because it does not require cold storage. (Source: [BBC](#), 2020).

As Chuol John, journalist at the Voice of Reconciliation, writes in the pandemic post section of this newsletter: health authorities in South Sudan are working hard to secure the vaccine. Dr. Joseph Wamala, the WHO's Country Preparedness and International Health Regulation officer, he writes, calls the vaccine development encouraging news. However, Dr. Wamala warns that it will take time for the first doses to arrive in South Sudan and advises the public to continue practicing social distancing and wearing face masks. Vice President Madam Rebecca Nyandeng launched the Africa Mask Week initiative with the Ministry of Health, WHO, Africa CDC, African Union Office of the Youth Envoy and other partners (Source: [MOH](#)).

Internews media partners continue to address misperceptions about COVID-19 and expressed concern about on-going wrestling competitions in Lakes, Central Equatoria and Jonglei State, as they saw thousands of spectators gather without observing public health measures. On page 7 of this newsletter, you will read more about our partner's work.

This update was written by Dr. Mike Gubay, Health Communication Project Manager.

Case count & stats

 **South Sudan** | cumulative cases: **3,154**

New cases: +145 | **Deaths:** 62 | **Recovered:** 2,977

Source: [Ministry of Health](#), 04 December 2020

 **Africa** | cumulative cases: **2,197,353**

New cases: +210,489 | **Deaths:** 52,505 | **Recovered:** 1,863,522

Source: [Africa CDC](#), 04 December 2020

 **Global** | cumulative cases: **63,965,092**

New cases: +9,663,636 | **Deaths:** 1,488,120 | **Recovered:** 45,426,39

Source: [WHO](#), [Worldometer](#), 04 December 2020




My mask protects you.

Your mask protects me.



AFRICA MASK WEEK

#AfricaMaskWeek
#WearAMask



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Frequently heard topics

Reopening of schools

"School administrators should involve parents in anything they are doing to ensure the protection of our children from the deadly virus."

Male, 59, Aweil, Northern Bahr el Ghazal

"Government should provide handwashing containers and sanitizers in schools. The teachers should monitor pupils who resist adhering to prevention policies. This will help prevent students from getting ill. Parents can also remind their children to strictly follow health guidelines."

Male, Alel Warrap State

Transmission and rumours

"The immunity of the people of Bor is strong and can stop COVID-19 from getting us."

Female, 34, Bor, Jonglei State

"COVID-19 was washed away by the flooding in Bor town."

Male, 33, Block 3, Bor, Jonglei State

Funerals

"Unfortunately, some of the community leaders are not seriously following the protocols when it comes to a funeral. You find people hugging, people chatting freely, people staying close together, people getting close to the dead body. It is like people are following their cultures more than following the prevention protocols."

Male, Juba, Central Equatoria

Maternal health

"I'm afraid of coronavirus because I heard that when you are positive with the virus you will not produce."

Female, 20, Gudele, Juba, Central Equatoria

"I don't trust the vaccine because I heard that if one takes it one will not be able to produce again."

Female, Munuki, 37, Juba, Central Equatoria

Awareness Raising

"Let awareness be done on TV and public cinemas and those who are sick be shown to the public. Mere talking about Coronavirus is not helping people understand the dangers of the virus. Our people believe what they see. If the sick are shown on TV, the people will develop fear for coronavirus."

Male, Yambio, Western Equatoria

Facemasks

"Many of the people living in the village can't afford buying the facemask. We request partners and the Ministry of Health to help them with the facemask so that they too can be protected from the virus."

Male, Northern Bahr el Ghazal

"I don't use a facemask because it causes rashes on my mouth."

Male, Northern Bahr el Ghazal



Stay Home. Stay Safe. Save Lives.

COVID19: Taking care of yourself

Keeping physically active is good for your physical, mental and spiritual well-being

Try to be active and stay healthy, even while you are spending more time at home

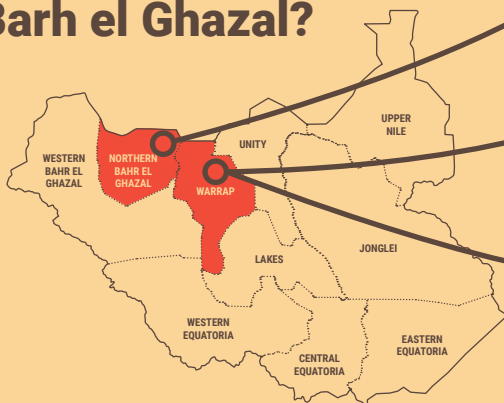


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IN FOCUS

What are we hearing in Warrap State and Northern Barh el Ghazal?



"We are confused about this disease. This is because we are told that isolation is only for people confirmed to have COVID-19. However now we are told that all individuals who show respiratory disease symptoms or those who have been exposed to a COVID-19 positive individual."

Male, 39, Aweil South, Northern Barh el Ghazal

"Staying in the sun warms your body and coronavirus does not affect people in hot climate. Is that true?"

Female, 26, Panyok, Warrap State

"Preventive measures have to be followed with joking. I'm saying this because it is very important to protect kids in school because when they are not protected, they will bring the virus home."

Male, Ahou, Warrap State

Weather and COVID-19

That temperature and the spread of COVID-19 are linked is a common misperception, say scientists in *Nature* (2020). Recent search led by The University of Texas at Austin shows that temperature and humidity do not play a significant role in the spread. That means whether it's hot or cold outside, the transmission of COVID-19 from one person to the next depends almost entirely on human behavior, and not on temperature (*Science Daily*, 2020). Countries with hot climates are also severely affected by COVID-19, including countries like Brazil where case numbers continue to rise, and millions have been affected. Brazil has a similar climate like South Sudan. South Africa is also an example of a country with a hot climate, but a large number of COVID-19 cases.

✓ Isolation

There is a difference between "going in isolation" and "quarantine", says [CDC](#).

Quarantine keeps someone who was in close contact with someone who has COVID-19 away from others.

If you had close contact with a person who has COVID-19, CDC recommends that you:

- Stay home until 14 days after your last contact.
- Check your temperature twice a day and watch for symptoms of COVID-19.
- If possible, stay away from people who are at higher-risk for getting very sick from COVID-19.

Isolation keeps someone who is sick or tested positive for COVID-19 without symptoms away from others, even in their own home.

If you are sick and think or know you have COVID-19 stay home until after:

- At least 10 days since symptoms first appeared and;
- At least 24 hours with no fever without fever-reducing medication and
- Symptoms have improved

If you tested positive for COVID-19 but do not have symptoms:

- Stay home until after 10 days have passed since your positive test
- If you live with others, stay in a specific "sick room" or area and away from other people or animals, including pets. Use a separate bathroom, if available.

Media guidance:

- Please see two useful videos from CDC here: [this one](#) is about the difference between isolation and quarantine, and [this one](#) contains details on how clean your house if someone is ill with COVID-19.

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IN FOCUS

What are we hearing in Central Equatoria?



"I am afraid of sanitizing my hands with the sanitizers because if it gets in contact with eyes or mouth it is likely to blind me. Are hand sanitizers toxic?"

Male, 49, Juba Town, Central Equatoria

"In my view as one of those trained on COVID-19, the statement about facemasks is very important. For us to combat coronavirus, let us believe in the masks and avoid social gatherings. All we need to do is to protect ourselves against coronavirus. I got training by the Ministry of Health and I now have a lot of knowledge about coronavirus."

Male, Juba Central Equatoria

"Some of us who work as drivers of public transport nowadays some drivers carry passengers full in the vehicles. So, I want to know is there a directive on this?"

Anonymous, Juba Central Equatoria

Transport directive

Health guidelines from the Ministry of Health in South Sudan dictate that 1,5 meters physical distance should be taken to prevent the COVID-19 virus from spreading. This includes the space between people in public transport. Measures include that people travelling by public transport should always wear a facemask, to protect themselves and others. It is difficult to not get frustrated when you have to wait a long time for public transport that is not crowded, and sometimes it simply is not an option to not take a shared taxi, but try as much as you can to keep distance and wear your mask. With your actions you don't only protect yourself, but your family and your community.

✓ Hand sanitizers



CDC recommends washing hands with soap and water whenever possible because handwashing reduces the amounts of all types of germs and chemicals on hands. But if soap and water are not available, using a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol can help you avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others (Source: [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov)).

However, it is dangerous for your health to swallow hand-sanitizer or to rub it in your eyes. People are getting sick and some have even died after swallowing hand sanitizer, the US CDC and Prevention in a CNN article (2020). Others have suffered impaired vision or seizures. Hand sanitizer is everywhere and is useful for cleaning the hands during the coronavirus pandemic. But it's not safe to swallow, the CDC cautions: "alcohol-based hand sanitizer products should never be ingested".

If you have accidentally swallowed and or rubbed hand sanitizer in your eyes, or the eyes of someone else, please follow safety instructions on the bottle. If you are feeling unwell - immediately seek care from a medical professional.

Media contacts:

For more information about COVID-19 transport directives, please consider contacting the Ministry of Transport, and or the Ministry of Health directly:

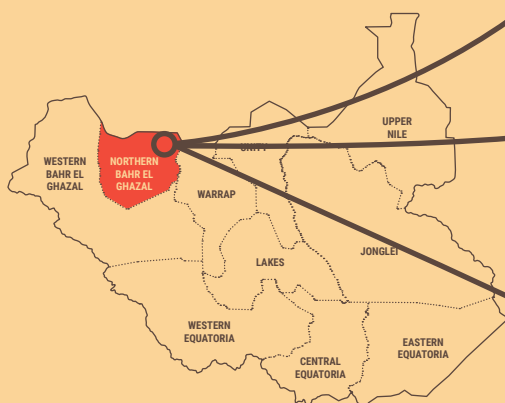
Doctor Thuou Loi  0927134045/917103275  loi.ezekiel92@gmail.com

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IN FOCUS

What are we hearing in Northern Bahr al Ghazal?



"School administrations should be very kind with these school children by trying to allow few students in the classrooms so that they can sit far from each other. Secondly, they should involve us the parents in anything they are doing to protect our children from the deadly virus."

Male, Aweil, Northern Bahr el Ghazal

"After they announced the existence of COVID-19, some people said that a number of community tradition healers can cure it using traditional herbs. But now the doctors are saying that Corona doesn't have a vaccine either traditionally or manufactured medicines. All in all I urge our people to be very serious and listen to what these doctors are telling us to do since the outbreak began."

Male, Aweil Northern Bahr el Ghazal

"Did the ministry of general education make an informed decision to allow children to return to school with the deadly virus still around? Teachers are saying they have nowhere to refer the students when they are feeling unwell because some of the health facilities are very far from the school and sometimes the students might infect themselves before reaching the hospital for testing."

Male, Aweil Northern Bahr el Ghazal

Reporting tips - treatment and trials



To date, there are no specific nor licenced medicines for COVID-19. Many treatments are under investigation, however, and will be tested through rigorous clinical trials, says World Health Organization (2020). More than 500 clinical trials have been launched worldwide as scientists race against time to investigate treatment options for COVID-19. The New York Times publishes a nice COVID-19 treatment tracker, which shows which treatments are currently being tested here. Please know that if a drug makes it to trial, that does not make it a cure. Don't fall into the trap of trying to be the first with information before it has been verified by reliable sources (Internews, 2020). See here the pitfalls of reporting on treatments before they are proven to be effective and 3 steps to determine whether a medical study is newsworthy (Internews, 2020).

✓ Traditional medicine

It has not been proven that traditional medicine can cure or help treat COVID-19. In fact, it has actually been advised against in many contexts because doctors don't know if traditional medicine cures or even worsens health outcomes in patients. As such, it is best to seek professional medical care of licenced health care workers in hospitals if you have a fever, a cough, and difficulty breathing. Call in advance, advises WHO (2020).

The Regional Expert Committee on Traditional Medicine for COVID-19 formed by the World Health Organization (WHO), the Africa CDC and the African Union Commission for Social Affairs has endorsed a protocol for phase III clinical trials of herbal medicine for COVID-19. "Just like other areas of medicine, sound science is the sole basis for safe and effective traditional medicine therapies," said Dr Tumusiime, Director of Universal Health Coverage and Life Course Cluster at WHO Regional Office for Africa (Source: WHO, 2020).

Media contacts:

For more information about the traditional medicine trials for WHO, Africa CDC and the African Union, contact
Collins Boakye-Agyemang, Communications and marketing officer WHO,
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FEATURE

High hopes: new COVID-19 vaccine 95% effective

By Chol John, Voice of Reconciliation

South Sudan's health ministry says it is keeping a close eye on the new COVID-19 vaccines with hopes of securing some doses as soon as possible. A South Sudan health official says the Ministry will work with health partners like the WHO to obtain a certified vaccine.

An analysis of the Phase 3 clinical trial of US pharmaceutical Pfizer's coronavirus vaccine shows it was 95% effective in preventing COVID-19 infections and caused no serious safety concerns, the company said on Wednesday, 18 November 2020. "Efficacy was consistent across age, race, and ethnicity demographics. The observed efficacy in adults over 65 years of age was over 94%," stated the company in a joint-statement with its German partner, BioNTech.

Doctor Mayen Machut Achiek, Undersecretary in South Sudan's Health Ministry, says South Sudan is working with its partners to secure the vaccine as soon as it reaches the market. As Achiek mentioned: "We would like to have a share of that because we have got also a significant number of people living with chronic conditions that can just be enough to make you succumb to COVID-19, so we will be asking WHO and our partners, so we also get the benefit for our citizens of this new vaccine."

Joseph Wamala, the WHO's Country Preparedness and International Health Regulation Officer, calls the Pfizer development good news. He states: "The protection is achieved within 28 days of initial vaccination. Two doses are required

and there are no serious side-effects currently. These are largely preliminary results. WHO welcomes this encouraging news."

More than 43,000 participants – of which more than 40,000 were given a second dose of the vaccine – were part of Pfizer's

majority are aged between 56 and 85 years old.

The drug companies say 50 million doses of the vaccine will be produced by the end of the year and they hope to produce up to 1.3 billion doses by the end of 2021. American biotech company Moderna also

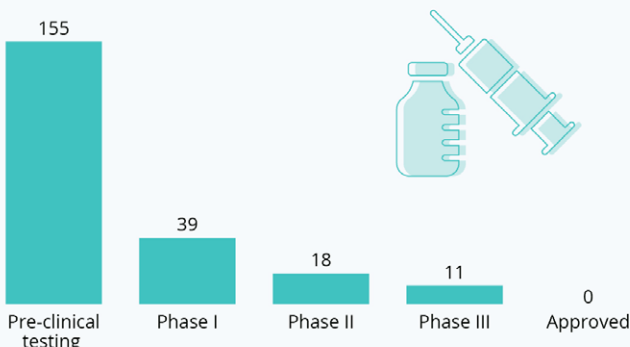
a vaccine for the disease.

Wamala says it will take time for the first doses to arrive in South Sudan and advises South Sudanese to continue practicing social distancing and wearing face masks in the meantime. He states: "It is still important that communities and individuals continue to observe public health measures. Mask wearing, physical distancing and frequent hand-washing constitute the new normal. People should avoid crowded places with many people. People should avoid close contact setting and confined closed places with poor ventilation to reduce the risk of COVID spread."

In South Sudan, as of November 18, 3,037 people have been confirmed positive of coronavirus since the outbreak of the pandemic in South Sudan according to the latest figures from the country's Health Ministry. 2,897 people have recovered; 59 people have died from COVID-19.

How Close Is The World To A Coronavirus Vaccine?

Number of Covid-19 vaccine candidates by developmental phase*



* As of November 09, 2020.

Source: World Health Organization via The Guardian



statista

er-BioNTech's phase 3 clinical trial that took place from July through November 13th. More than 42% of all participants, and 30% of U.S.-based participants were of racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds and the

announced nearly 95% efficacy in its experimental vaccine against the disease this week. While Pfizer and Moderna paved the way for a COVID-19 vaccine, other companies like Oxford and Sputnik are also working on

This story was aired as part of VOR's COVID-19 weekly Bulletin, aired on Saturday, November 21st, and repeated on Saturday, November 28th.

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The COVID-19 Beat Update

- In November **UN House's Boda Boda Talk Talk** (Juba) programme aired various programmes related to COVID-19. One programme discussed the relationship between COVID-19 and nutrition. Nutrition partners from IMC reported that COVID-19 can have adverse effects in *"people who have no strong resistance or nutrients in the body"*. Radio broadcasts also discussed the relationship between COVID-19 and other diseases, and showcased the differences between the different signs and symptoms of the illnesses. Then the journalists interviewed church leaders from different denominations about their work to prevent COVID-19 from spreading during prayer and included some *"tongue-twisters"* about COVID-19 in their programming for entertainment and learning. Lastly the two-way communication initiative discussed preventive measures to be taken during food distribution activities and interviewed queue controlling partners of Worldvision who explained how safety is guaranteed at their distribution centre, and spoke with beneficiaries.
- The **Voice of Reconciliation** (Bor) spoke with a doctor on their radio station: healthleader Achol Suzan stressed the importance for one to protect themselves from coronavirus, and encouraged listeners to *"continue doing what they intended to do and serve families and community what they need"*. The radio also discussed how students can protect themselves from COVID-19 during group discussion studies. Student Deng Jok reported practical measures his group has put in place: *"we carry out our group discussions while wearing our face masks so that we can prevent the spread of coronavirus"*. Another facet of their programming was about families displaced by flood in Bor: experts invited suggested ways of how families displaced by floods can ensure maximum protection against COVID-19. Akuok Akuok, a citizen, reported that misinformation about the floods is rife in Bor: *"We are not getting coronavirus although we are not keeping social distancing and staying together, if there is coronavirus why are we not seeing more people tested positive"*.
- The **Radio Community** (TRC, broadcasting across South Sudan) reported various myths about COVID-19 and funerals. A broadcaster reported: *"when one dies especially there are people always gathered to have an organized funeral as a way of saying bye to the dead love"*. A doctor reported on the radio that: *"it is risking the life of others because they might not know what the person was suffering from... [people should] always allow their dead people to be buried by those in charge without them touching the dead, especially when crying. I know in our area here dead bodies are being washed before burial and this is always done by the members of the community which should stop for the safety of everyone. Sometimes people die of unknown diseases and if you touch that dead body you might end up contracting the disease that you heard killed her or him"*.
- Other listeners of radio stations part of The **Radio Community** demonstrated changed behaviors and perceptions around COVID-19. As Jaboc Mabior from Jarweng village reported: *"Coronavirus is not a disease for educated people or those who live in town. It is the disease for everybody, long time ago, the current normal flu killed people in it outbreak but now is no longer a threat to us again, so both are related and this new disease will like flu a whole world manage to get it vaccine"*. Ayuen Kuol from Mingkaman town stated: *"I wanted to say this, coronavirus is within us and I can infect anyone of us, either you are in America or South Sudan, either slim or having big belly, it can catch if you come in physical contact with the person infected"*. Kalany Malual from Mingkaman town. With increased knowledge, however, many citizens report being worried about their children in schools, and call for additional support to be able to adhere to mask-wearing and physical distancing guidelines within the education system.

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⊕ Capacity building opportunities:

Internews reporter guidance on chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine and second wave!

In these uncertain times, as governments steer their countries toward recovery in the midst of a pandemic, they now face the common challenge of easing lockdowns and restrictions while balancing various health, social, and economic concerns. In the meantime, many countries are also seeing an uptick in COVID-19 cases, as fears grow of a second wave of infections. This guidance from [Internews Global BHA programme](#) provides you with the most current scientific research on a second wave of COVID-19.

The drugs chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine have been talked about a lot lately. This [Internews BHA guide](#) discusses the latest research on the drugs and their implications for treating COVID-19.



Free courses on digital security from IWMF

Journalists and others interested in increasing their digital security can attend several [free online courses](#).

The International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF) offers self-directed courses on the Totem Project platform aiming to help journalists protect their safety online. Courses include "Phishing attacks," "Secure messaging apps," "Secure passwords," "How to bypass internet censorship," "Social media research" and more. Content is available in English, Spanish, French, Arabic and Farsi. The courses can be taken at any time. Registration is free.



→ Project update:

In November, BHA/USAID supported Internews South Sudan's COVID-19 project continued producing lifesaving, fact-checked content that corresponds to citizens' concerns around the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Internews COVID-19 response project has achieved the following:

- Media partners collected feedback from the different States in the country. Responding to the feedback IN media partners produced and broadcasted radio programs in various formats on a range of topics including: engaging traditional healers, COVID 19 and gender-based violence, contact tracing and transmission and prevention during wrestling matches.
- To address message fatigue, media partners utilized

different approaches including innovative programming using arts and sporting activities to pass on messages, and social media.

- Internews BBTT information services produced and narrowcasted programs at Juba PoC 1 and 3 and will soon start narrowcasting BBTT programs in Melut and Gok Machar.
- Internews continues to actively participate in COVID-19 coordination forums and partners with ICAP to produce a series of radio programs on contact tracing.

Our project will run until the end of January 2021. For more information, please contact dr. Michael Gubay – Health Communication Project Manager at Internews, mgubay@internews.org