

Media Bulletin #4

December 2020



Movement restrictions and health guidelines imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic pose additional challenges to journalists and media institutions and it becomes even more pressing to strictly observe journalistic standards and ethics to avoid passing on fake news.

Additionally, with the rapid changes and overload of information due to COVID-19 it has become imperative for Sudan to develop its own "health journalism" that covers medical and scientific research findings and developments. This also serves to raise awareness of the disease and what measures to take to avoid catching it.

Did you know...?



A health journalist does not have to be a doctor, but he must build a knowledge base that enables him to address topics in a professional and engaging manner.

For more on health journalism see

Health journalism...No longer a "luxury"
Al Jazeera Media Institute (aljazeera.net).

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 277 posts collected in Arabic between 19 November and 1 December 2020, on Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and Instagram.

Talking Point: Oxygen Shortages

Social media users in Sudan have been discussing the issue of oxygen shortages in Sudanese hospitals and complications this has caused for many families. Many Sudanese have been searching in vain for hospitals with the capacity to treat their loved ones, sparking a great deal of anxiety and anger at perceived failures.

Amid these shortages, people have pointed to serious difficulties accessing oxygen for people suffering COVID-19. Sudanese social media users widely comment on this challenge, as one wrote on Facebook: "We were searching for a hospital for six hours, and in the end, we found a bed in Bahri, but unfortunately the central oxygen was cut off suddenly and without notice across the ward and my father passed away".



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Useful Contacts

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Suggested Resource

<https://datajournalism.internews.org/jordan>



Talking Point: Oxygen Shortages

Social media reports deal with the possible reasons for the shortages, including the possibility that some are buying oxygen tanks privately and storing them at home.

Mr. Hussein Malasi, Director of Development and Quality at the Sudanese Liquid Air Company Ltd. (the leading manufacturer and supplier of gases for industry and healthcare in Sudan) says: "Oxygen production in Sudan exceeds consumption. The current crisis is caused by a shortage of oxygen cylinders because of increasing demand by people panic buying due to fears of the COVID-19 pandemic. The oxygen tanks themselves are not produced in Sudan and have to be imported, which is a complicated and lengthy process.

Malasi adds that some hospitals do not have larger oxygen storage tankers and rely on smaller, portable tanks. As a company, we work to fill the tankers in the hospital, which is an easy process. One of the solutions to this crisis is for private and public hospitals to be equipped with tankers, thus reducing the demand for the portable tanks.

Outside of the capital, the oxygen shortages are further complicated by transportation difficulties. The cost of transporting oxygen tanks from Khartoum to the outlying states is very high and there is currently a petrol shortage, adding an extra layer of challenges to the rest of the country.



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Talking Point: Africans are "immune" to COVID-19

Many Sudanese social media users claim that Africans, and particularly the Sudanese have immunity to COVID-19 due to all the endemic diseases, vaccines and medications that they have taken over the years. One Facebook user wrote: "The secret of why COVID-19 does not affect Africa remains hidden! Don't you think that the endemic African diseases have played a role in providing Africans immunity? There are also many childhood vaccines that we receive here that have reduced the severity of the epidemic in Africa ... I think that is the reason."

Fact: There is no evidence that Sudanese or Africans are immune to COVID-19. Such rumors are dangerous as they encourage people to neglect the necessary health procedures and guidelines, and by extension impact the rest of the family, the workplace and the community in general.

For more information on debunking rumours and misinformation

firstdraftnews.org



Advice on data journalism during pandemic and other crises

ijnet.org



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