

Key Principles for Conflict-Sensitive Messaging

The global COVID-19 Pandemic is having an impact on all aspects of life around the world and will affect different nations and peoples in different ways. Conflict sensitivity thinking is more critical in the midst of a crisis like COVID-19. This is precisely because clinical and social measures being practiced globally, will have implications in different local contexts. The CSRF emphasises that responses in South Sudan should take note of the local context, norms and practices of the South Sudanese people. The principles listed below are based on conversations with South Sudanese aid workers, who noted that messaging around COVID-19 will need to resonate with the different cultural practices, norms and conflict issues in the country.

1. Messages should be inclusive and impartial. It is important to ensure that individuals or communities are not at risk of being blamed or targeted, and that messaging does not re-enforce existing tensions or negative stereotypes.
2. Public information and the means by which it is delivered will need to be adapted to local contexts and community traditions, reflecting the varied cultures and communities in South Sudan. Tailoring messages to the context/community will ensure that they resonate, reduce potential to be seen as 'foreign' and can be conflict-sensitive.
3. National staff from communities across South Sudan should play a key role in developing context specific and conflict sensitive messages, as they can ensure messages reflect and address South Sudanese norms and practices.
4. Engaging trusted community leaders (for example, faith or traditional leaders) in both the development and delivery of messages will be critical to their uptake and acceptance. They may also provide valuable insights into community concerns, rumors, conflicts and cultural dynamics than outsiders.
5. Gender dynamics will be a major factor in COVID-19 response in South Sudan. Messages must consider gender norms and their relationship to conflict, as women and men will be affected differently, and recognize that gender norms are different across South Sudanese communities.
6. The 'KISS' Principle – Keep It Simple and Short! Short messages can easily be owned, translated, adapted or replicated, based on the conflict sensitivities and considerations in specific locations, or concerns of specific populations.