

To inform COVID-19 risk communication outreach strategies, REACH put together this brief to summarize key findings on trends in communication preferences and modalities from past REACH assessments.

Key Findings:

Information about COVID-19 should adopt a **multi-channel messaging strategy** and flow via **existing community communication structures**, especially as community information sources reportedly generally do not change during an emergency¹:

- There is a **strong reported preference for in-person information sharing**, especially through community leaders and community mobilizers; however, health-related messaging is reportedly transmitted **in-person from health-related actors (Ministry of Health (MoH), community health workers, non-governmental organisations (NGOs))**, not community leaders, in most assessed settlements where the Ebola response has/is taking place (Eastern, Western and Central Equatoria)
- **Radio Miraya was reported as the most widely listened radio station**
 - In camp settings, radio was listed as the primary channel to access trustworthy news and information
 - In multiple Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant (KI) interviews, respondents agreed that “**radio is only a useful source of communication when supplemented with in-person**” forms of communication
- **Cell-phone coverage was found to be unevenly distributed across South Sudan**
 - States with the **lowest** reported cell-phone coverage are **Eastern Equatoria, Upper Nile and Jonglei**
 - States with the **highest** reported cellphone penetration are **Central Equatoria, Lakes, Warrap and Western Bahr el Gazhal**
- Despite state-level variation in reported preferred spoken language of communication, **English is reported as the most preferred language of written communication in all ten states**

Methodology

Findings in this brief are drawn from several REACH assessments, namely:

1. Area of Knowledge (AoK) January Assessment Round: Data collected from 2,646 KIs interviewed on 2,042 settlements in 70 counties across all ten states of South Sudan between 1 and 31 January 2020
2. AoK February Assessment Round: Data collected from 2,546 KIs interviewed on 2,014 settlements in 71 counties across all ten states of South Sudan between 1 and 28 February 2020
3. REACH's August 2017 [“Media and Telecommunications Landscape Guide”](#)
4. REACH's February 2020 [“Accountability to Affected Populations: Community Perceptions of Humanitarian Assistance in South Sudan”](#) Report

While both the “Landscape and Media Telecommunications Guide” and “Accountability to Affected Populations: Community Perceptions of Humanitarian Assistance in South Sudan” reports employed a mixed method approach, quantitative data was collected through [REACH's AoK, KI-based remote-monitoring survey tool](#). The tool captures settlement level data and employs purposive sampling (direct KI interviews with people who have direct knowledge about a particular settlement). It is not possible to disaggregate the data by gender, age, and/or disability.

The findings should be considered as indicative and are not statistically generalisable. Links to the terms of reference (TORs) and detailed explanations of each report's methodology can be found in the hyperlinks above.

¹ REACH Media and Landscape Telecommunications Guide, 2017

In-person communication

- **There is a strong reported preference for verbal and in-person information sharing** concerning receiving news about humanitarian assistance and political/economic events:
 - According to REACH's Accountability to Affected Populations Report (2020), **>60% of assessed settlements reported preferring to receive information about humanitarian assistance from community leaders and community mobilizers.**
 - Nationwide, REACH's January 2020 AoK data indicated that, in the month prior to data collection, the following were the primary news sources for most people in assessed settlements:
 - Community leader/chief: 39%
 - Friends/family: 25%
 - Local authority: 18%
 - Community health care worker: 2%
- According to REACH's Landscape and Media Telecommunications Guide (2017), 81% of respondents reported that their information sources do not change during an emergency, indicating the value of using existing communication structures.
- According to REACH January 2020 AoK data, at a national level, 99% of assessed settlements reported the presence of community leadership in their settlements, suggesting widespread availability of community leaders to serve as nodes of information and communication.

Health communication (Ebola)

The following data is drawn from REACH's January 2020 AoK data collection in Western, Central, and Eastern Equatoria states, regarding the Ebola response:

- When looking at communications about health-related concerns, Ebola-messaging is reportedly transmitted to most communities **in-person from health-related actors (MoH, community health workers, NGOs), not community leaders.**
- Ebola-messaging is reportedly seen as more acceptable from trained health-actors, as reported by KIs. It would stand to reason that similar health communication preferences would be replicated concerning COVID-19.

Main channel of information about Ebola for most people in the settlement, according to KIs

Communication Modality	Percentage
In-Person Communication	63%
Radio Station	31%
Loudspeaker	5%
Social Media	1%
Television Station	0%

Main source of messaging about Ebola for most people in the settlement, according to KIs

Communication Source	Percentage
Community Health Workers	29%
NGOs	27%
Ministry of Health	26%
Friends	15%
Community or Religious Leaders	2%

Cell Phone Coverage

The following data is drawn from REACH's January 2020 AoK data collection:

- As COVID-19 is **likely to have the greatest potential impact in urban areas**², with better network coverage, the humanitarian response should explore standardised SMS messaging with the MoH and Zain/MTN.
 - States with the **lowest** reported cell-phone coverage are Eastern Equatoria, Upper Nile and Jonglei.
 - States with the **highest** reported cell-phone coverage are Central Equatoria, Lakes, Warrap and Western Bahr el Gazhal.

² According to the South Sudan Covid-19 National Task Force.

Percentage of assessed settlements with cell-phone coverage according to KIs, by state

State	No network	Network Sometimes + Often
Central Equatoria	7%	93%
Eastern Equatoria	64%	36%
Jonglei	37%	40%
Lakes	10%	85%
Northern Bahr el Gazhal	3%	82%
Unity	21%	73%
Upper Nile	41%	54%
Warrap	8%	80%
Western Bahr el Gazhal	26%	50%
Western Equatoria	29%	45%

Top 10 counties with the highest proportion of assessed settlements with no network

County, State	No Network
Budi, Eastern Equatoria	100%
Nagero, Western Equatoria	100%
Rumbek North, Lakes	100%
Fangak, Jonglei	100%
Kapoeta East, Eastern Equatoria	98%
Panyijiar, Unity	92%
Akobo, Jonglei	89%
Ezo, Western Equatoria	89%
Nyirrol, Jonglei	67%
Manyo, Upper Nile	64%

Radio

- The radio landscape was primarily dominated by three main networks, but the most widely listened to was Radio Miraya, according to REACH's Media and Landscape Telecommunications Guide.
- According to Internews, 51% of people surveyed reported using a radio once a week.³ While this statistic was reported in 2015, systemic conflict, underinvestment in communication infrastructure and sustained displacement may suggest that this percentage has remained relatively stable over the last five years.⁴
- In camp-settings, radio was listed as the primary channel to access trustworthy news and information by 30% of respondents in REACH's Media and Landscape Telecommunications Guide.⁵
 - Multiple FGD and KI respondents agreed that **"radio is only a useful source of communication when supplemented with in-person"** forms of communication.
- According to REACH's Media and Landscape Telecommunications Guide, radio is reported as a key tool in hard-to-reach areas.⁶
 - In the same report, radio is reported as the most important news channel in southern Upper Nile and northern Jonglei, two areas with systematic underinvestment in communication and transportation infrastructure, presumably due to higher proportions of the population that can understand and access radio content broadcasted in Arabic.

Language Preferences

The following tables indicate **the top 5 languages reportedly preferred for both oral and written communication by assessed settlements at the state level**,⁷ according to REACH's February 2020 AoK data collection.

Despite state-level variation in the reported community preferences for the spoken language of communication, **English is consistently reported as the most preferred language of written communication across all ten states.**

³ Internews, 'We're still listening: A survey of media access in accessible areas of South Sudan in 2015', March 2016

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ REACH Media and Landscape Telecommunications Guide, 2017

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ When less than 0.5% assessed settlements reported a language, the language was not reported.

Central Equatoria

Preferred Spoken		Preferred Written	
Juba Arabic	45%	English	80%
Bari	21%	Bari	11%
Kuku	12%	Juba Arabic	4%
Kakwa	5%	Other	1%
Lulubo	5%	Mundari	1%

Eastern Equatoria

Preferred Spoken		Preferred Written	
Toposa	66%	English	50%
Juba Arabic	13%	Toposa	35%
Didinga	10%	Didinga	6%
Buya	3%	Buya	2%
English	2%	Other	1%

Western Equatoria

Preferred Spoken		Preferred Written	
Zande	39%	English	71%
Juba Arabic	35%	Zande	21%
Moru	8%	Moru	1%
Baka	4%	Balanda	1%
Azande	3%	-	-

Jonglei

Preferred Spoken		Preferred Written	
Nuer	46%	English	71%
Dinka	27%	Nuer	26%
Nuer (Naath)	12%	Dinka	1%
Arabic (Classical)	8%	-	-
English	3%	-	-

Unity

Preferred Spoken		Preferred Written	
Nuer (Naath)	49%	English	58%
Dinka	25%	Nuer (naath)	22%
English	10%	Nuer	10%
Nuer	8%	None	1%
-	-	Dinka	1%

Upper Nile

Preferred Spoken		Preferred Written	
Nuer	23%	English	30%
Arabic (Classical)	23%	Nuer	23%
English	11%	Arabic (Classical)	14%
Shilluk (Chollo)	10%	Don't Know	11%
Don't Know	10%	Shilluk (Chollo)	10%

Warrap

Preferred Spoken		Preferred Written	
Dinka (Jieng)	91%	English	91%
Dinka	5%	Arabic (Classical)	4%
Arabic (Classical)	2%	Dinka (Jieng)	4%
English	1%	-	-
-	-	-	-

Lakes

Preferred Spoken		Preferred Written	
Dinka	44%	English	35%
Dinka (Jieng)	36%	Dinka (Jieng)	32%
Atuot (Reel)	9%	Dinka	16%
Jur (Beli & Modo)	2%	Atuot (Reel)	7%
English	1%	None	1%

Northern Bahr el Gazhal

Preferred Spoken		Preferred Written	
Dinka	96%	English	92%
Luo	2%	Dinka	6%
Jurchol (luo)	1%	Jurchol (Luo)	1%
-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-

Western Bahr el Gazhal

Preferred Spoken		Preferred Written	
Arabic (Classical)	73%	English	81%
Other	10%	Arabic (Classical)	12%
Jurchol (luo)	7%	-	-
English	2%	-	-
Dinka	1%	-	-