

# Conversations to transform health

Trustworthy health information is a vital service in its own right



*Credit Engin Akyurzt/Unsplash/CC*

## Health & Internews

Internews has a unique role in supporting information that is vital to the effective delivery of global health services. For 35 years, we have worked to ensure access to trusted information people need to make the best decisions for themselves and their communities.

In 2020, Internews is responding with urgency to the unprecedented scale and speed of rumor spreading about COVID-19, using tested approaches in misinformation management and media capacity building. Swift science interventions and country-by-country mitigation efforts demanded a pandemic response plan anchored in established strategies to strengthen information ecosystems.

Addressing all areas of public health, we work with information-generators to improve quality and achieve impact to ignite conversations about good health practices.

We engage communities in dialogue that supports uptake and informed decision making.

Internews works with our partners around the globe to:

- **Engage and inform;**
- **Build local capacity to hold to account those who provide health products and services; and**
- **Facilitate two-way conversations that shape and change norms.**

“The current global COVID-19 epidemic features mechanisms of delivery of scientific information that are frankly unprecedented, adding to pressure for proper interpretation by the media and public. It’s time to put information in the driver’s seat of global and national epidemic responses.” — Laurie Garrett, author of *The Coming Plague*

# Our Pillars:

## 1. Engage and inform:

*From rapid response in health emergencies to making meaning of epidemics that evolve over time*

When rumor and misinformation fuel the spread of disease and when people ignore or misunderstand health messaging, the need to “get it right” in the appropriate language and cultural context becomes ever more critical for those who work to fight disease outbreaks.

Emerging disease pandemics, such as COVID-19, and epidemic outbreaks, such as Ebola and Zika call for a nimble humanitarian response that leverages trusted information networks to fill information gaps and stop dangerous rumors.

Slow burning epidemics have similar challenges but effective strategies are more nuanced. These crises require skilled journalists trained to interpret scientific data, studies, and evolving treatments to help people understand the impact of disease in the long term.

Both approaches share the need to engage and inform local communities in trusted, two-way conversations.

## 2. Hold to account:

*Strengthening health systems through accountability at the community level*

Citizens have the right to demand quality health services. Internews has deep experience empowering media and CSOs to hold local authorities to account and ensure an effective health system with better outcomes. Media investigations and informed advocacy on public platforms empower communities to participate in the development of public health systems that encompass their concerns and improves services.

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### INFORMATION HAS IMPACT:

# 94%

of surveyed listeners to Internews’ cholera prevention radio program in South Sudan reported changing their behavior as result of the show.

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## 4. Manage Misinformation in the Community:

*Address rumors through two-way communication with community members*

We use Information Ecosystem Analysis to understand how health information is sourced, shared and trusted at community level, including informal information flows and the power of local influencers. This understanding is the basis of our Community Engagement work that maintains conversations with the communities we serve, either face to face, on social media, or through local media outlets. By keeping our finger on the pulse of community health concerns and information needs, we are able to track, analyze and respond to rumors and other information trends as they arise.

## 3. Shape and change norms:

*Igniting conversations that change social norms, improve attitudes and reduce stigma*

Cultural norms, taboos, rumors and ingrained personal habits can cause people to resist what is best for their health.

When well-meaning interventions are misunderstood, they fail. When norms are out of sync with science, individuals and communities will resist the most effective and contemporary solutions.

This resistance leads to unsafe practices and large-scale underuse of health services.

An informed media ignites conversations that change norms and attitudes over time and defends against rumor, misinformation and uninformed bias.



Internews, an international nonprofit organization, empowers people worldwide with the trustworthy, high-quality news and information they need to make informed decisions, participate in their communities, and hold power to account.