



Carol Hungwe, UN Volunteer leading the Media Relations Team of UNMISS.
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Combating misinformation in South Sudan during COVID-19

Caroline Hungwe (Zimbabwe) is a UN Volunteer serving with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) as a member of the Communications and Public Information Section. She shares how she is helping combat misinformation in South Sudan during the COVID-19 pandemic.

My role in the [UN Mission in South Sudan \(UNMISS\)](#) is an interesting one. I lead the Media Relations Team for the mission's Communications and Public Information section. My day begins bright and early at 5:45am, when I compile the day's media monitoring report, highlighting key political, economic and social issues, both in South Sudan and internationally.

This report is important, as it often sets the day's agenda for UNMISS senior leadership and key UN stakeholders, giving them a bird's eye view of the areas within the mission's mandate that require urgent intervention and political engagement.

Currently, with the COVID-19 pandemic spreading rapidly in South Sudan, the role of credible, transparent and effective communications with media partners and local communities has become critical. I alternate between going into the office and telecommuting from my accommodation, where we are under partial lockdown.

Due to the operational restrictions posed by the pandemic, I have become even more vigilant about monitoring public and media discourse. I make sure to stay updated with the latest news so that the mission and our humanitarian partners have access to relevant and verified information.

Prior to the pandemic, I facilitated field visits across South Sudan for international media partners and was responsible for arranging interviews for mission leaders and holding press conferences. However, because of COVID-19, I've had to adapt to new circumstances while still ensuring that stories from South Sudan are amplified.

“ Stories are critical, especially those that explore the massive peace and security needs of vulnerable groups such as women and children. Ultimately, I spotlight issues that UNMISS tries to address every day, giving such stories the space they deserve.

With the situation constantly evolving, I am proud that my work keeps people informed about COVID-19, while simultaneously highlighting the efforts of UNMISS in support of the Government and humanitarian partners that are mitigating the spread of the virus. There has been a lot of hate speech, stigma and misinformation that the Mission is battling, and it has been my privilege to create a balanced, coherent counter-narrative.

I never imagined a world locked down by a virus that has re-shaped all our professional and personal lives as we continue to do the best we can, far away from our families and loved ones, for a country that is already ravaged by conflict.

“ Today's world is uncharted territory for everyone. I do my best to maintain a semblance of normalcy while being caught in a completely abnormal situation — I read, I watch television, I catch up with my neighbours, while keeping appropriate physical distance. My family lives in one of the Coronavirus epicentres; video calls to them are

“ another lifeline.

In honour of this year's [International Day of UN Peacekeepers](#), my message to women and girls across the world is to understand that peacekeeping is not just about soldiers. Peace is achieved through a combination of diverse roles — civilian, military and police. Women and men can take up similar and different roles in missions — no role is limited by sex or gender.

“ During my time here, I have noticed that UN Peacekeeping in field locations remains male-dominated. However, I am optimistic that more women like me are opting to work for international peace and security in field locations. The deployment of each one of us is a step closer to breaking the glass ceiling and ensuring gender equality is achieved in all aspects of peace operations.

Women constitute more than 50 per cent of the global population — there can be no durable peace unless they have a voice in resolving issues that impact them directly. I hope more women peacekeepers will aspire to bring peace to fragile, conflict-ridden societies and work to involve local women within their respective political processes.

I hope my story in combatting misinformation in such a crucial time of crisis inspires at least one young woman to opt for the remarkably rewarding experience of being a UN peacekeeper.

This piece was first published by UN Peacekeeping (see [here](#)) as part of the UNMISS campaign highlighting [women in peacekeeping](#) in the lead up to the International Day of UN Peacekeepers on 29 May.



<https://medium.com/@UNPeacekeeping/combating-misinformation-in-south-sudan-during-covid-19-27661c7c663>



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