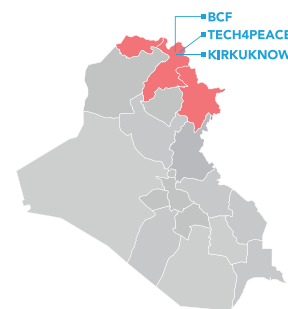


Introduction to Rooted in Trust

Rooted in Trust (RiT) is a USAID Bureau of Humanitarian Affairs (BHA)-funded project by Internews that aims at countering the unprecedented scale and speed of the spread of rumors and misinformation on COVID-19 health response and COVID-19 vaccines among vulnerable populations affected by humanitarian crisis. In Iraq, Rooted in Trust works with media, community-based organizations, and health and humanitarian actors to build a healthier information ecosystem that is responsive to the needs of internally displaced populations in northern Iraq, with the goal of disrupting and mitigating the flow of misleading and inaccurate information.



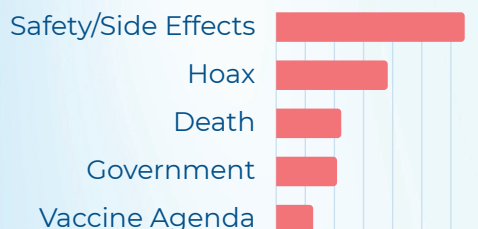
About this Bulletin

This bulletin provides community and health workers with the latest rumor data identified among internally displaced populations in northern Iraq. The aim is to guide and inform risk communication and community engagement efforts within the COVID-19 response. It profiles rumors that have been circulating online and offline in Northern Iraq during October 2022. In total, 254 rumors have been collected. Data were collected through in-person listing groups with IDPs, as well as various pages, groups, and accounts that have significant user engagement from Facebook, Telegram, Twitter, Instagram, and other social media platforms.

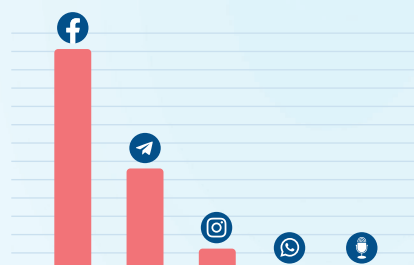
Methodology

In Iraq, RiT 2.0 collects, manages, and addresses any instance of online and offline COVID-19 and other outbreak rumors in targeted communities and population groups of concern (Women, Disabilities IDPs, etc.) in two local languages Arabic and Kurdish. Following the fact-checking process, rumors go through categorization and qualitative and quantitative data analysis. Then we produce products such as this community bulletin to be shared and used by our target communities.

Top Rumor Themes



Source of Online Rumors



COVID-19 situation overview in the country:

Iraq recorded 929 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in October, an 43% decrease from September. Deaths also reduced from 6 in September to 2 in October. However, community members are stating that they don't take tests when they have symptoms of COVID-19. This means that there are other cases of COVID-19 that haven't been recorded by the Ministry of Health or WHO. Vaccination coverage remains low, with only 19.7% of people fully vaccinated. According to, WHO, the total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases reached 2,461,247 by October 31. Also, as of the end of October 2022, a total of 19,394,811 vaccine doses were administered countrywide. Out of these, 11,234,347 received the first dose, 7,899,315 received the second dose and 260,388 received the third dose. In October, there were new recommendations released by the Iraqi Ministry of Health; including the age group 12-5 years old for the COVID-19 vaccination and providing the 4th dose of the COVID-19 vaccine after 6 months from the last dose.¹

Saif Al-Badr, the Ministry of Health's spokesperson, stated to the local media "Although there are fewer cases, however, the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic still exists." He also added, "the danger of COVID-19 still exists, especially after entering the winter season and spreading the seasonal flu".² Regarding Hemorrhagic Fever (CCHF) cases, the Iraqi Ministry of Health confirmed that "the number of confirmed CCHF cases has reached 336, including 66 deaths, from the beginning of 2022 until mid-October. Moreover, Cholera is still spreading in various parts of the country and confirmed cases have exceeded 3,100 with 20 deaths by the end of October."³

254 Rumors Collected

What do people say?



"The COVID-19 vaccine causes breast cancer, and there are more than 20 cases of breast cancer."



"If you have cancer, your disease will increase with vaccination."



"I have cancer, so I should not get the COVID-19 vaccine."



"The vaccine causes male infertility and female cancer."

Fact-checking:



- The Director of the Immunization Department at the Iraqi Ministry of Health, Dr. Firas Jabbar Al-Moussawi, confirmed that the Ministry of Health did not record an increase in the number of breast cancer cases after vaccination with COVID-19 vaccines. He also added, "associating the issue of breast cancer with COVID-19 vaccines is part of rumors and myths". He stated that people with cancer "are the first group targeted by taking COVID-19 vaccines."
- If you have cancer, you are at a higher risk of developing severe COVID-19 symptoms.⁴
- There is no [evidence](#) linking COVID-19 vaccines with cancer, as Dr. [Steven Bergham](#) from the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Centre stated that vaccines reduce the risk of hospitalization and death from COVID-19, specifically, among people with cancer.
- Dr. Dana Karim, a Hematologist who works at Hiwa Cancer Private Center, stated that the cause of breast cancer includes sets of factors that are not related to vaccines, and he assured that the major risk factors of breast cancer are more likely (Genetics, First-degree relatives having cancers, Hormonal therapies, Oral contraceptive pills, etc.) Furthermore, he declined that the vaccine increases the severity of disease and progression among cancer patients.

Recommendations:



For community members:

- Cancer patients should consult specialists while they receive chemotherapy and planning to take the COVID-19 vaccine.
- Women should be screened for breast cancer at least once a year and consult a specialist to prevent infections and the progression of the disease. They should get the COVID-19 vaccine to strengthen their immune systems against the virus and its devastating effects.
- Community members can contact the Ministry of Health's hotline number: 122 (by adding your area code, for example: (Erbil 066122), whenever they have any serious cases including COVID-19 and Cancer that need urgent response.

254 Rumors Collected

Recommendations:



For community workers:

- Community health workers have to provide accurate and practical information to people. Thus, community health workers should be aware of the vaccine-related cancer rumors and misinformation through providing trustworthy source as [WHO](#) and [MoH Ministry of Health](#) web portal, as a result, they can respond accordingly.
- Community-based organizations should provide community engagement activities which are important to inform community members that there is no link between the COVID-19 vaccine and cancer.
- Community health workers should provide facts and explanations through conducting a specific female/adult awareness session related to cancer disease and invite female doctors to guide and respond to the participants' concerns and questions, also it is important to let people express their fear and concern about such kinds of situations.
- Community workers should involve communities to understand their fears related to vaccines and diseases, otherwise, public health workers should provide awareness sessions in the health centers inside and outside the IDP camps focusing on vaccine safety.

Sources:

1. <https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/minutes-health-cluster-coordination-meeting-27-october-2022>
2. <https://www.nasnews.com/view.php?cat=95982>
3. <https://www.ina.iq/168768--.html>
4. <https://www.cancer.org/treatment/coronavirus-COVID-19-and-cancer/COVID-19-vaccines-in-people-with-cancer.html>

Hotline

122



COVID-19 Snapshot



929

Confirmed cases



2

Deaths



19,394,050

Vaccine doses administered

Important Links and Helplines:

MOH KRI website: www.gov.krd/moh/
Self-Registration for Covid-19 vaccination:
Corona hotline: 122
vac.health.digital.gov.krd



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



Internews
Local voices. Global change.



Rooted in Trust



Tech For Peace
It ends with us



BCF
BAZIANI CHARITY FOUNDATION



KIRKUKNOW
From People To People