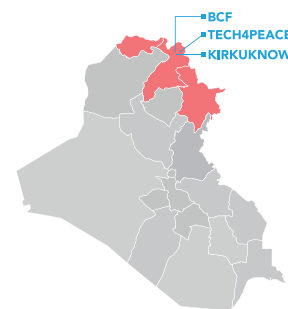


Introduction to Rooted in Trust

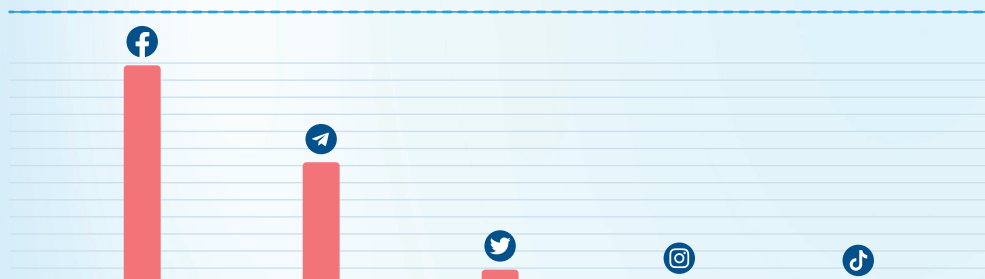
Rooted in Trust (RiT) is a USAID Bureau of Humanitarian Affairs (BHA)-funded project by Internews that aims at countering the unprecedented scale and speed of the spread of rumors and misinformation on COVID-19 health response and COVID-19 vaccines among vulnerable populations affected by humanitarian 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 November 2022. In total, 331 rumors have been collected during November. Data was 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.

Source of Online Rumors



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.

COVID-19 situation overview in the country:

Iraq recorded 2,866 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in November, more than 300% increase compared to October. Deaths reportedly have also increased compared to October, in which there were five death cases by the COVID-19 virus in November. Vaccination coverage remains low, with only 19.7% of people fully vaccinated. According to WHO, the total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases was 2,463,296 by November 28th, 2022. Also, as of the end of November 2022, a total of 19,467,872 vaccine doses had been administered countrywide. Out of these, 11,281,293 people had received their first dose, 7,919,146 people have received their second dose and 267,433 people had received a booster dose.

On November 11th, Riaz Abdul-amir Halafi, Director General of Public Health at the Ministry of Health - Iraq, stated to the local media that "the number of coronavirus cases has increased this week and Iraq has entered the fifth wave of the new coronavirus."¹ However, on November 30th, the Ministry of Health issued new regulations related to the COVID-19 virus, in which starting from December 1st "people entering or leaving Iraq will not be asked for a vaccine card", also "wearing masks is free and not compulsory in all open and closed public places."² Regarding Cholera, according to the local media, the disease is still spreading in the country, but there is no update from the government authorities about the increased number of cases in November. However, as of the end of October, confirmed cases have exceeded 3,100 with 20 deaths. Cholera has spread across Iraq, severely hitting Sulaymaniyah province in the northern Kurdistan region. Cholera spreads through polluted water and unhealthy food, several factors, especially unhealthy food, or food delivery services that use vegetables, in this regard, many people are affected by the disease and no accurate data accessible in KRI.³



Fact-checking:



- At the beginning of 2022, the Ministry of Health in Iraq issued a statement that mixing these two drugs in a single syringe is prohibited due to the high risk to the human health system.⁴
- Dr. Hadi Mohammed Abdulla, Pulmonologist Specialist and Head of the Chest Department Sulaymaniyah-Health Directorate, stated that a syringe mixture is composed of a steroid drug called dexamethasone and diclofenac sodium, this mixture, especially dexamethasone injection, should not be used in a COVID-19 patient in the first week of the illness mild to moderate case and patients with normal oxygen level, if used in the first week it depresses immunity and the virus replicates rapidly and the patient deteriorates further. There were many patients who died of these mixtures.
- There is no medical proof that a mixed syringe of Decadron and Voltaren can be used for treating COVID-19. In addition, mixed syringe to its well-known side effects such as increasing blood pressure, sugar, and the retention of body fluids which can weaken the immune system.⁵
- Dr. Ayad Sahker from a health clinic of [Heevie](#) Foundation at Hassan Sham IDP Camp stated that when community members feel any symptoms of COVID-19, they can approach their specialized health clinic which is available 24/7 for medical advice and receive the required treatment at our pharmacy.

Recommendations:



- Health local actors in the field such as [Heevie](#) Foundation in collaboration with Camp management in Hassan sham camp should regularly flag COVID-19 symptoms, its treatment, and prevention in their daily awareness sessions.
- Dr. Hadi Mohammed Abdulla, a Pulmonologist Specialist, recommends that syringe mixtures should not be used haphazardly and without an expert prescription. This fact should be highlighted in the engagement activities through health and humanitarian actors.
- If you have any symptoms of COVID-19, you can directly reach out to [Heevie](#) Foundation via +964 750 4314204 or +964 62 7625155 or visit their [website](#) to mention the camp area and get further directions and assistance.



331 Rumors Collected

Rumor #2



"We are not afraid of COVID-19, we are afraid of cholera, because the vaccine causes cholera"



Fact-checking:



- Cholera is an acute diarrheal infection caused by ingestion of food or water contaminated with the bacterium *Vibrio cholerae*.⁶
- Head of the Communicable Disease Department in the Ministry of Health-Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Dr. Beena Shawky, stated that "there is no relationship between the COVID-19 vaccine and getting sick with Cholera. She also stated that "cholera is only transmitted through the mouth route and that its spread is closely linked to a lack of access to clean water and sanitation facilities".
- Dr. Hadi Mohammed Abdulla, Pulmonologist Specialist and Head of the Chest Department Sulaymaniyah-Health Directorate stated that there is no relationship between the COVID-19 vaccine and vibrio cholera. Cholera is characterized by severe watery diarrhea leading to dehydration, predominantly transmitted via the fecal-oral route from contaminated water, not through vaccination.
- Recently, the provision of health services in the camps through humanitarian organizations has decreased significantly, and some organizations have withdrawn their services in the IDP camps. This has affected IDPs in terms of a lack of trust in humanitarian organizations and their services. This once again paves the way for the creation and spread of misinformation about the various crises and on top of them the health outbreaks.

Recommendations:



- Head of the Communicable Disease Department in the Ministry of Health-Kurdistan Region of Iraq Dr. Beena Shawky, stated that in case community members got infected with Cholera they must care more for hygiene and to supply with clean water (chlorinated or boiled water) as they are more prone to severe infections. Therefore, there is no correlation between receiving the Covid-19 vaccine and Cholera.
- The community members should be aware of protective measures or any activity that is held by field workers related to health and do not use any medication without consulting a specific doctor to ask for a medication.
- Health and Community-based organizations should approach the Ministry of Health via MoH email address (info@moh.gov.krd) for any queries and latest updates on COVID-19 and provide the community members with the accurate information about the COVID-19 vaccine and its side effects.
- For further assistance, community members can contact the Ministry of Health-KRG via 00964662230414 or visit their official [website](#) to get more information regarding the COVID-19 vaccination.
- Humanitarian actors and community-based organizations should have a clear strategy regarding reducing their services and withdrawal from the IDP camps. They have to coordinate with the camp management and other relevant stakeholders in providing a clear approach regarding cutting their services inside the camps. This affects the trust between them and the IDP community, in which the lack of trust feeds the concerns and hesitancy toward any issues, especially the COVID-19 vaccination.

Sources:

1. <https://www.ina.iq/170641--.html>
2. <https://www.facebook.com/MOH.GOV.IQ/posts/pfbid02ozHyHrMptJNWuyLyMtMriyZbMSij7tiU13dEucyQedkXRwCBiqvWn1W2bWgmUqCI>
3. <https://www.newarab.com/news/cholera-outbreak-infects-thousands-iraqi-kurdistan-region>
4. <https://www.facebook.com/kurdistandoctorsfanpage/photos/a.170211330061208/1441364189612576/>
5. <https://www.facebook.com/100044720603574/posts/pfbid029vihqtWQywZhihVznET4AcMEH8Xveuk3ZhXBSk6LTqGwcPXHN7LukQzE9Afai9Fwl/?mibextid=EWszqh>
6. Cholera (who.int)

COVID-19 Snapshot



2,866
Confirmed cases



5
Deaths



19,467,872
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

Hotline

122



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It ends with Us



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