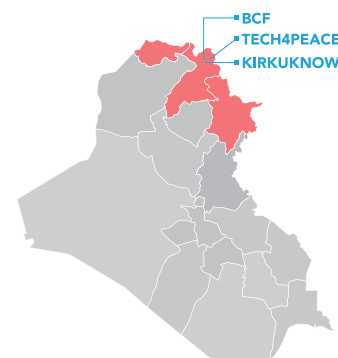


## Introduction to Rooted in Trust

Rooted in Trust (RiT) 2.0 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 about the 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.



## Methodology



In Iraq, RiT 2.0 collects, manages, and addresses any instance of online and offline COVID-19 rumors in targeted communities and population groups of concern (women, persons with disabilities, IDPs, etc.) in two local languages - Arabic and Kurdish. Following the fact-checking process, rumors go through categorization, qualitative and quantitative data analysis, and then various products are produced to be shared with the target population.

Total number of collected rumors in November 2022 is:

331

233

online rumors

98

offline rumors

What does the media say?



*"Finally, the Corona is over, we have passed the era of Coronavirus".*

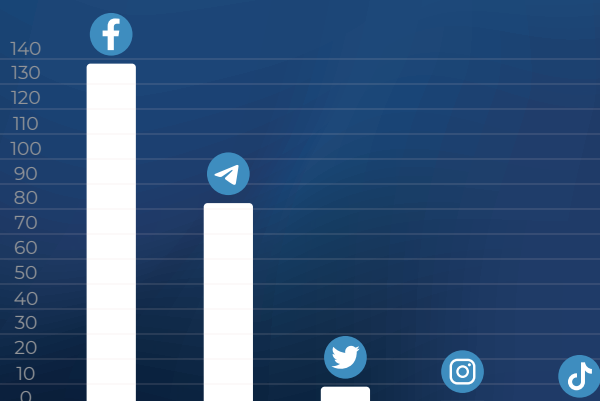
The first news was disseminated on a popular electronic news page early morning on November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022. The media page has 438K followers, and that news was viewed by 4.3K viewers; 189 people interacted with it and 17 people commented on it.



*"From now on, COVID-19 is a normal pandemic"*

The second news was podcasted on a TV page, which has about 3,734,893 followers. 501 interacted with the post, and 17 people commented on the post. Some of the interesting comments are highlighted here such as "So remove the vaccine", "It was the same before, but you exaggerated it", "Half of the population was destroyed and now it is becoming an epidemic?"

## Source of Online Rumors



## What are the effects and risks of these rumors/misinformation?

Disseminating inaccurate epidemiological rumors such as “From now on, COVID-19 is a normal pandemic” and “Finally, the Corona is over, we have passed the era of Coronavirus” on a popular Iraqi social media with (436,175 followers) will have a significant negative impact on taking any preventative social distancing, hygiene, and most importantly, on taking COVID-19 vaccines, while the rate of overall vaccine uptake in Iraq is still under 20%. Vaccine hesitancy will be lengthening further.

The media content has a profound impact on the trust that the humanities and health research have sought to build throughout history. Therefore, this misleading information could cause Iraqi communities to not believe in other upcoming diseases and their treatments.

This media content will damage the relationship between Iraqi citizens and health organizations, as well as other key figures, while there is still a strong foundation in terms of basic needs such as services and medicines, lack of staff, limited new resources, and lack of large epidemiological research laboratories.

### Fact-checking



- ◆ According to the World Health Organization's dashboard, Iraq recorded 1,489 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in November 2022, a 98.7% increase compared to October. Deaths reportedly were the same in November as in October; there were two deaths caused by the COVID-19 virus in November.<sup>1</sup>
- ◆ Despite the exitance of the COVID-19 virus in the country, there is no active media coverage from the Iraqi media outlets regarding the COVID-19 situation, vaccination process, awareness campaigns, etc.



### Recommendations

- ◆ There are numerous principles of journalism that are very important during the implementation of any media coverage. Journalists should adhere to them for providing and presenting comprehensive information clearly and accurately. The aim of adherence to these principles by media professionals is to enable the reader and viewer to obtain accurate information required so that they can make important decisions on all important issues related to aspects of their private and public lives. Related to the above media coverage, some of the principles were missing. The absence of the principles can easily turn media coverage into misinformation and disinformation.
- ◆ VERIFICATION is when journalists and media outlets make sure that the information, they provide is accurate and authentic. Where have they got the information? In the coverage, have they used DATA? Where has the data come from? What SOURCES have they relied on? How can they know if their sources are authentic and accurate? Have they used reliable formal sources such as WHO and the Ministry of Health (Iraq and KRG)? Or any other sources? Is the source primary, meaning is it ORIGINAL?
- ◆ Journalists and media outlets should always ask themselves whether their sources are biased or not! How can journalists and media outlets verify a source to know that the information they get is accurate and authentic? It's not always easy, but they can consider these steps. All the above procedures should be reflected in the media coverage for TRANSPARENCY, so the receivers and audience can get a clear picture and comprehensive information to make their own decisions for their lives.
- ◆ By declaring and highlighting that “COVID-19 is over” or “COVID-19 is a normal pandemic” without providing comprehensive information from media coverage and without adhering to the principles of journalism, it the media is showing an absence of OBJECTIVITY, which will tend to produce biased information.

### TOTAL NUMBER OF COLLECTED RUMORS

331

## Tips for Journalists:



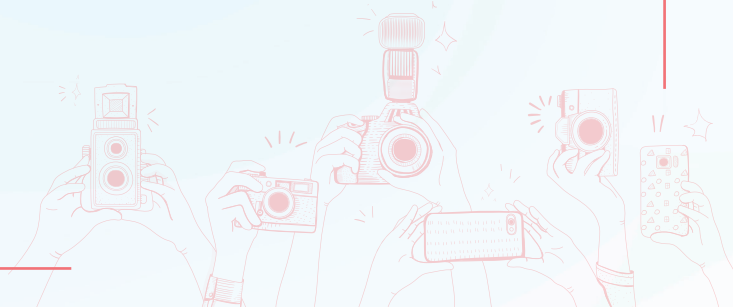
- ◆ Misinformation is any form of incorrect or false information that is unintentionally disseminated, that causes misrepresentation or deception of others.
- ◆ Disinformation refers to false information intentionally disseminated for the purpose of misleading or deceiving others.
- ◆ Journalists should make proper preparation by researching the subject, facts, events, myths, and reliable data on the issues they cover. These are essential procedures before disseminating any media content to the audience.
- ◆ Journalists should report objectively on all topics. Not drift into subjectivity by providing personal opinion.
- ◆ Hot and breaking news always defines an important current issue, and journalists have great responsibilities when they get involved in other topics and issues. When any other topics are raised, they should provide complete information and analysis.
- ◆ Introducing a new topic without data and experience may lead to misinformation.
- ◆ Writing a headline with a few sentences without length on an important topic such as COVID-19 is not enough. Incomplete information always leads to misinformation.
- ◆ It is essential for journalists to use understandable language and clear headlines. The headline must be factually accurate, easy to understand, and in line with the media content.
- ◆ Do not fall into misinformation, keep your data clear and authentic. Investigate the data and information on health issues thoroughly, and do not allow your objectivity to be affected by the emotionality implicit in the rumors.
- ◆ Focus on the measures being taken by local and national authorities and humanitarian organizations to assist the community during the pandemic.
- ◆ The role of a journalist is to provide a clear picture of the pandemic and the diseases to their audiences. Avoid giving personal opinions when stating a piece of information, so that the audience does not confuse the facts with your points of view.
- ◆ Validation of information is mandatory in health reporting to ensure accurate information is disseminated to communities and vulnerable groups.
- ◆ News coverage should always be comprised of verified facts. It is important to fact-check the information and data with relevant authorities, such as the Ministry of Health and WHO, before publishing it.

## Useful Sources for Journalists:

- ◆ [Health Journalism Network - Internews](#)
- ◆ [Addressing COVID-19 Misinformation: Lessons From The Frontlines In 100 Countries](#)
- ◆ [COVID-19 Journalist Guidance: How to report on traditional medicines and COVID-19](#)
- ◆ [TWB glossary for COVID-19](#)
- ◆ [WHO – Iraq Country Webpage](#)

## Sources:

- ◆ <https://covid19.who.int/region/emro/country/iq>



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