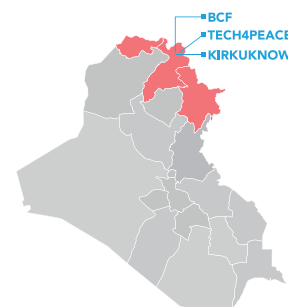


Introduction to Rooted in Trust

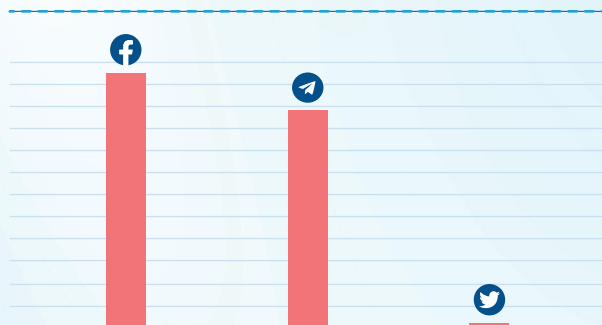
Rooted in Trust (RIT) is a USAID Bureau of Humanitarian Affairs (BHA)-funded project by Internews that aims at countering the unprecedented scale and speed of the spread of rumors and misinformation on health, climate change, and gender issues among vulnerable populations affected by humanitarian crisis. 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 strengthening in information ecosystem by better addressing and listening to the needs, risks, and concerns of the communities that we listen to.



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 and other health and humanitarian issues. It profiles rumors that have been circulating online and offline in Northern Iraq during January 2023. In total, 276 rumors have been collected during January. Data is 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, CCHF, Cholera, Monkeypox, 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:

According to the WHO dashboard, Iraq reported 172 confirmed COVID-19 cases in January 2023, an 83.7% decrease compared to December 2022. Death cases also decreased in January 2023 compared to December 2022, in which there was only one death case as a result of COVID-19 in January 2023, as compared to December 2022, which were nine death cases. Moreover, starting in January, the Ministry of Health of the Federal Government has stopped publishing the number of cases and other information related to the COVID-19 virus on its social media platforms. Despite the decrease in COVID-19 cases, there are still rumors circulating among the community, as they have concerns, risks, and needs in relation to COVID-19 and other health issues. Only in January, 276 rumors were collected, in which the number of rumors increased by 62% compared to December 2022. Vaccination coverage remained low, with only 19.8% of people fully vaccinated. According to the WHO dashboard, the total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases since the beginning of the pandemic until the end of January 2023 is 2,465,545, and 25,375 death cases.



Rumors
Category #1

"Kerosene treats Coronavirus and strengthens the immune system, better than a doctor's treatment."



"If we drank oil [Kerosene], it would be better than the vaccine."



"Smelling the scent of oil [Kerosene] in order to reduce the pressures of life or diseases."



Fact-checking:



- Kerosene lamps or stoves provide a cheap and reliable source of light and heat, allowing IDPs to cook meals, stay warm, and carry out daily activities after dark but at the same time kerosene is a risky liquid to be drunk and smelled by humans because of its adverse effects on physical health, hence it contains harmful substances and fumes that affect health. It is irrational to give up or replace vaccines and treatments for diseases with petroleum products. The use of these substances by injection, inhalation, or swallowing leads to [poisoning](#) and may lead to death.
- Dr. Taba Jalyzada, Senior House Officer of Internal Medicine, stated that there is no scientific basis to suggest that drinking Kerosene is better than getting a vaccine. In fact, consuming Kerosene/oil can be harmful to the body and is not an effective method.
- Kerosene can pose several health threats to humans and the environment. The inhalation of oil can cause [respiratory irritation, headaches, dizziness, nausea upset stomach, vomiting, and diarrhea](#). It can also lead to long-term health problems, such as lung damage and neurological disorders. Therefore, it is important to take necessary precautions to prevent and mitigate the health threats posed by oil.

Recommendations:



- Camp management should reach out the community member directly such as sector leaders, religious leaders, and breadwinners of the family so that, they can get help to address any misconceptions and provide practical tips for improving their health. Additionally, they can also provide resources like [WHO](#) and [the Ministry of Health-KRC](#) for those who may require additional rapid support or medical attention.
- Community-based organizations should invite an expert from the Ministry of Health for an awareness session on the risk of misinformation on certain health and to explain the use of kerosene and the ingredients, furthermore, discuss the risky side effect of kerosene.

276

Rumors
Collected



Rooted
in Trust



Rumors
Category #2

"Scabies spread due to the COVID-19 vaccine."



"Scabies is a dangerous disease, there was no Scabies before Coronavirus."



Fact-checking:



- There is no relationship between scabies and the COVID-19 vaccine. [Human scabies](#) skin condition is caused by the mite (*Sarcoptes scabiei*), and scabies is considered an infectious disease that is transmitted by direct skin-to-skin contact. As for [the Covid-19 vaccines](#), some of them contain a weakened form of an infectious agent that allows [our immune system](#) quickly recognizes and fight it. Other vaccines provide the body with genetic codes that enable the body to produce immune antigens that fight the virus on its own. In other words, there is no correlation between scabies and Covid-19 vaccines, as was claimed.
- Dr. Ayad Shakir from the [Heevie](#) foundation, stated that in Hassan sham U2 IDP camp, the community health workers and the doctors are providing the necessary orientation, guiding the families of the affected people and the camp population on how to deal with patients affected with scabies and also how to protect themselves and their neighbors against scabies through awareness sessions, with regular follow up on each patient until they fully recover. The orientation and awareness activities are extended to cover the schools in the camp accordingly.
- Dr. Taba Jalyzada, Senior House Officer of Internal Medicine, stated that scabies is a highly contagious skin disease caused by an infestation of the itch mite. It is a serious and uncomfortable condition that can lead to intense itching and a rash that can cover much of the body. Noteworthy, scabies has been around for a long time and was a known health issue even before the COVID-19 pandemic emerged.

Recommendations:



- Partners should liaise with the [Heevie](#) foundation to increase the awareness sessions and to invite their doctors to explain and conduct Q&A open discussions with the participants, as Ayad Shakir from the [Heevie](#) foundation stated that in Hassan sham U2 IDP camp, they have a specific unit of awareness, each morning employees set out to the camp and provide awareness session on specific diseases including scabies.
- It is important for the health service providers inside the IDP camps to take proactive steps to educate and raise awareness and communicate on treatment about health issues and specific available diseases among the community members.
- Community-based organizations should provide the list of medical clinics in the camp and share a copy with each participant to be informed on the health service for rapid response.
- People should be sensible to avoid skin contact with oil and other substances that may cause irritation or harm and it is important to take certain preventive measures such as wearing protective clothing, using safety equipment, and making sure that oils and other substances are stored in a safe and secure place.
- If you are diagnosed with suspected you may have been exposed to scabies, follow your doctor's treatment plan carefully and try to visit the [Heevie](#) foundation for further guidelines in all KRI-IDP camps, including any recommended skin treatments and the cleaning of personal items and living spaces, therefore avoid close contact with people who have scabies until they have been treated.

Sources:

1. <https://covid19.who.int/region/emro/country/iq>
2. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/ar/first-aid/first-aid-poisoning/basics/art-20056657>
3. [Light_Crude_Oil_and_Your_Health.pdf](#) (cdc.gov)
4. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK544306>
5. [الموقع العالمي | ما تحتاج معرفته عن لقاحات كوفيد-19](#) (unicef.org)
6. [كيف تعمل اللقاحات؟](#) (who.int)
7. [الجرب](#) (who.int)

COVID-19 Snapshot



2,465,545
Confirmed cases



25,375
Deaths



19,557,364
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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