

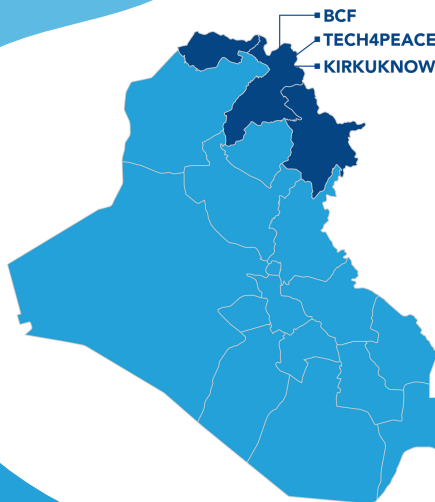
Community Bulletin

#7

Iraq
July 2022

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.



150 Rumors
Collected

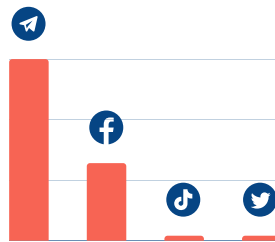
About This Bulletin

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 common rumors across social media in Iraq during July 2022. In total, 150 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.

Top Rumor Themes



Source of Online Rumors



Methodology

In Iraq, RiT 2.0 collects, manages, and addresses any instance of an online and offline COVID-19 Rumor 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

In July 2022, Iraq recorded 97,879 confirmed cases of the COVID-19 virus, and the rate increased by 447% compared to June 2022. Also, the number of deaths increased from 20 in June to 74 in July. Vaccination coverage remains low, with only 19.2% of people fully vaccinated. According to the WHO Iraq portal, the total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases reached 2,443,772 by July 31st. Saif Al-Badr, Ministry of Health's spokesperson, stated that Iraq is facing several epidemics, including COVID19 as the fifth wave is escalating dangerously. Also, 1,062 suspected Crimean Congo Hemorrhagic Fever cases were reported by July 30th, of which 269 were confirmed, with 48 deaths among confirmed cases. Confirmed cases were reported from all governorates except for Sulaymaniyah. Since the second week of June, the Cholera outbreak has been spreading in the most of governorates, with 449 confirmed cases of Cholera, including three deaths, until July 24th, 2022. Kirkuk was the most affected governorate, with 225 cases and two deaths. In the last week of July, there was a large protest in Baghdad, thousands of Muqtada al-Sadr's supporters breached Baghdad's Green Zone, where most of the government's key institutions and offices of foreign missions are located. The Ministry of Health stated that over 120 people were injured on July 30th. The protest is still ongoing and everyday people from other cities are joining the protest, this leads to an increase in the number of COVID-19 cases.^[1]

18,904,252
Doses Administered



74
Death



97,879
COVID-19 Cases



Rumor #1

Theme: Safety/Side effects

“

“People who take the vaccine should not donate blood at all because vaccines have side effects on the body”

”

Fact Checking

- ✓ **Dr. Ahmed Sami Kamal** mentioned people who have been vaccinated can donate blood. Vaccines do not have adverse side effects on peoples' blood, a specialist in Radiation Oncology who works in Government and private hospitals, verified that people usually could receive blood safely from another person who received a COVID-19 vaccine. COVID-19 vaccines don't contain bacteria or viruses that can cause infection.
- ✓ FDA blood donation eligibility guidance for those who receive a COVID-19 vaccination, and deferral times may vary depending on the type of vaccine an individual receives.^[2]
- ✓ Individuals diagnosed with COVID-19 or suspected of having COVID-19, also who had symptomatic disease, should refrain from donating blood for at least 10 days after full recovery from their symptoms.^[3]

Recommendations

for outreach workers and communities

- Health service providers should contact the Ministry of Health (MoH) through the health centers which are available in the IDP camps to conduct a vaccine awareness session and its side effects for community members.
- Health community workers should build an open discussion concerning the vaccination procedure in the health centers, outside or inside the IDP camps according to the engagement activity, in addition, to explain to them the accurate information on the vaccination process and disseminating trustworthy information on the rumors among them.
- Specialized doctors should be invited through partners on the specific rumor to declare the blood donating process before vaccination and after infection with the virus.



Source

1. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-62361737>
2. What to know about the Coronavirus and Blood Donation | American Red Cross ([redcrossblood.org](https://www.redcrossblood.org))
3. Updated Information for Blood Establishments Regarding the COVID-19 Pandemic and Blood Donation | FDA

Rumor #2

Theme: Safety/Side effects

Fact Checking

- ✓ The Director of the Immunization Department at the Iraqi Ministry of Health, Dr. Firas Jabbar Al-Moussawi, confirmed that people with cancer are the first group targeted by MoH for taking COVID-19 vaccines because these categories of patients are considered vulnerable, so if they are infected with the Coronavirus, their life will be at stake[4].
- ✓ Dr. Ahmed Sami Kamal a specialist in Radiation Oncology stated that the vaccine will not increase the stage of the disease. In addition, cancer patients are regarded as a high-risk group like some other diseases (heart disease or immunocompromised disease diseases). therefore, any cancer patients or cancer survivors should receive the COVID-19 vaccine, as we know cancer patients receive chemotherapy or radiation during treatment, and these treatments usually cause hematologic toxicity and many problems like a decrease in immunity of the patients, we recommend them to get the vaccine to decrease the adverse effects of the COVID-19 and the risk of mortality.
- ✓ Director of the Immunization Department at the Iraqi Ministry of Health, Dr. Firas Jabbar Al-Moussawi confirmed that vaccination would reduce hospitalization of patients and death even among the infected COVID-19 cases.

Source

4. ما حقيقة خطر لقاح فيروس كورونا للمصابين بمرض السرطان؟ (t4p.co)
5. <https://bit.ly/3ADKBy2>

“

If you have got cancer, your disease would increase with vaccination

”

Recommendations for outreach workers and communities

- Partners and community-based organizations that have community centers in the field should arrange special outreach activities for cancer patients to emphasize the importance and safety of vaccination.
- Health service providers should be well updated on the official trustworthy sources such as [MoH](#) and [WHO](#) Iraq, to inform community members on the rumors, disease prevention, as well as on vaccination process instead of relying on unconfirmed sources via social media.
- The annual cancer registry report for 2016 issued by the Cancer Council of Iraq shows an increase in the number of annual infections between 2005 and 2016, and a significant increase in the incidence of cancer in women compared to men. Where the percentage of women's injuries was 2% higher than men's injuries in 2005, but the difference in injury rates between the genders jumped to 28% by 2016. Therefore, it is recommended to organize raising awareness sessions through Women Empowerment Organization who's active in IDP camps on rumors regarding cancer linked to the COVID-19 vaccine[5]



Important Links and Helplines:

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

