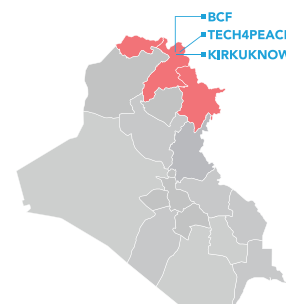


Introduction to Rooted in Trust

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 August 2022. In total, 235 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.

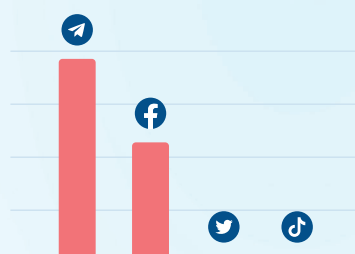
Methodology

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:

235 Rumors Collected

Iraq recorded 14,099 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in August, an 85.6% decrease from July. Deaths also reduced from 74 in July to 33 in August. Vaccination coverage remains low, with only 19.4% of people fully vaccinated. According to, WHO, the total number of cumulative confirmed COVID-19 cases in Iraq reached 2,457,871 by August 31st. Saif Al-Badr, Ministry of Health's spokesperson, stated on August 31st that "despite all the rumors about overcoming the crisis, the challenge of the Coronavirus still exists. We are expecting new epidemic waves and mutations, as happened in the past." He also added, "we still stress the need to adhere to preventive measures, wear masks, apply physical distancing, and receive vaccinations."¹

Regarding Hemorrhagic Fever (CCHF) cases in the country, the Iraqi Ministry of Health confirmed that "the number of people infected with CCHF has exceeded 300, including 60 deaths, since the beginning of 2022. Moreover, Cholera disease is still spreading in various areas of the country, in which from the beginning of the year until the end of August, the confirmed cases have exceeded 1,100, including five deaths."²

After more than three weeks of protests by supporters of Iraqi Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, there were heavy clashes in Baghdad on August 29th. At least 30 people were killed, and more than 180 others were injured in Baghdad as intense fighting continues between militias loyal to Muqtada al-Sadr and Iran-backed militias³. These political conflicts and struggles of forming a new government cabinet have a negative impact on all sectors in Iraq, in particular, the health sector, for example, the national COVID-19 vaccination campaign has been slowed all over Iraq, and it's inactive in the IDP camps.

What is Cholera?

Cholera is an acute diarrheal illness caused by infection of the intestine with *Vibrio cholerae* bacteria.⁴

SYMPTOMS



Diarrhea (Stool appears pale and milky)



Nausea and vomiting



Dehydration



Loose skin and dry mouth



Rapid heartbeat, Low blood pressure



Lose weight

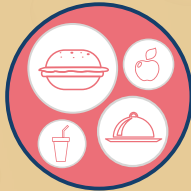
PREVENTION



Hands and utensils should be thoroughly washed before and after handling food.



Purchase raw materials and ingredients from clean stores that IDPs trust.



Raw food should be kept separate from other contaminated foods to avoid cross-contamination.



Food should be thoroughly cooked.



Frozen food and cold drinks should be kept at 4°C or lower to ensure safety.

Treatment:

The main method of cholera treatment is hydration via oral means. Treatment with antibiotics is advised for seriously unwell patients, along with fluids. Patients who continue to pass a lot of stools after rehydration therapy and have severe or mild dehydration are advised to do so as well. As soon as the patient can tolerate oral medication, antibiotics are administered.⁵



What do people say?

COVID-19 vaccination weakens the immune system and thus the person might get cholera easier.

Cholera is transmitted through the air.

The percentage of chlorine in the water is high that's why we get cholera.

Garlic and onion are very good to prevent cholera.



Fact-checking:



- The spokesperson of the Ministry of Health, Saif Al-Badr, stated that "the number of confirmed cases of cholera that were recorded in most of the provinces has exceeded one thousand." Saif Al-Badr confirmed that "this disease is transmitted through food and water, which means that the key to prevention is attention to hygiene, and also here comes the role of government and municipalities in the first place to follow up on restaurants' hygiene."⁶
- Dr. Huner Mohammed, Specialist in Internal Medicine, mentioned that Garlic and onion do not prevent you from cholera disease." When *Vibrio cholerae* bacteria are present in water or food, they can cause cholera, an acute diarrheal illness. As a result, there is no link between the COVID-19 vaccination and Cholera disease. Furthermore, cholera can be avoided by using chlorine pills and boiling water.
- Head of Communicable Disease Department in the Ministry of Health-Kurdistan Region of Iraq Dr. Beena Shawky, stated that "COVID-19 vaccination does not weaken the immune system in any way; in fact, it works with preparing the immune system to fight the virus, and there is no relationship between the COVID-19 vaccine and getting sick with the 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. She informed that a weak immune system does not increase the likelihood of getting cholera, in case they 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, they will need close follow up and fluid replacement according to cholera case management protocol. Besides, chlorination of water is one of the most efficient methods for killing *Vibrio cholerae* in water and preventing transmission

The WASH Cluster

indicated that "chlorination is a process of adding chlorine to drinking water to kill parasites, bacteria, and viruses, including *Vibrio cholerae*, which is the bacteria that causes cholera, during cholera season the amount of chlorine will be increased within limits harmless to humans in response to control the spread of cholera"

235 Rumors Collected

Recommendations:



For community members:

- The community members should be aware of protective measures or any activity that is held by field workers related to health.
- Contact Health centers immediately when feeling cholera symptoms.
- Community members have to contact the Ministry of Health's hotline number: 122 (by adding your area code, for example: (Erbil 066122), whenever they have any concerns and Health matters.
- Do not use any medication without consulting a specific doctor.

Hotline

122



Recommendations:



For community workers:

- Conduct joint sessions with relevant community field workers on the related misinformation of rumors and update them about the overall health condition to ensure that field workers be able to respond quickly on self-care practices, giving advice on intaking fluids and maintaining hygiene ahead of escalating cholera cases.
- Enhance topics related to boiling water before drinking, washing hands continually with soap, hygiene, and food handling practices in their daily activities to mitigate the spread of cholera. They should ensure that people receive accurate and trustworthy information about the current disease and its side effects from the main sources such as the [Ministry of Health](#) and [WHO](#).
- Raise awareness among people regarding the use of chlorine in clean water reservoirs during different seasons to prevent cholera and inform community members that the increase of chloramine is not related to cholera.

Sources:

1. <https://www.ina.iq/164465--.html>
2. <https://www.ina.iq/164465--.html>
3. <https://english.alaraby.co.uk/news/least-30-dead-clashes-baghdad-after-sadr-resigns>
4. <https://www.cdc.gov/cholera/illness.html>
5. <https://www.cdc.gov/cholera/treatment/rehydration-therapy.html>
6. <https://www.ina.iq/164475--.html>

COVID-19 Snapshot



14,099

Confirmed cases



33

Deaths



19,097,435

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
BAZANI CHARITY FOUNDATION



KIRKUKNOW
From People To People