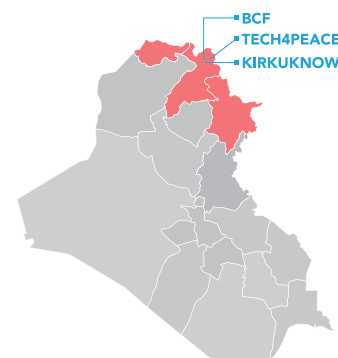


Introduction to Rooted in Trust

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.



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, qualitative and quantitative data analysis, and then producing products to be shared with the target population.

Total number of collected rumors in September 2022 is:

254

199
online rumors

55
offline rumors



What does
the media
say?

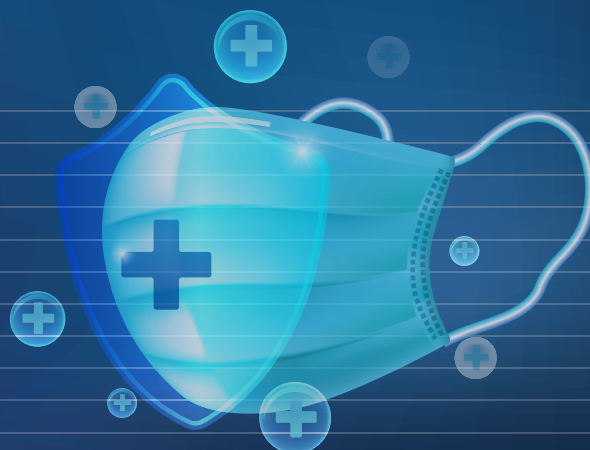
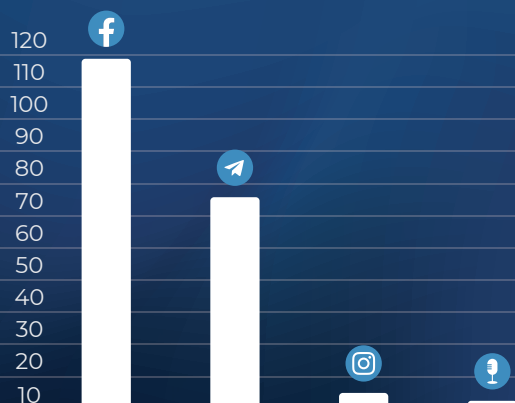


The Director of the World Health Organization is pleased with the good news: "The end of Corona is looming."



"Two years after the pandemic, global health gives good news"

Source of Online Rumors



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

Following the speech of the director of WHO's on 14th September 2022, on REUTERS channel, the Iraqi media outlets immediately made an announcement! with a big font that "there is great news, COVID-19 has ended" quoting partially Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus speech. This big news covered social media platforms both in Arabic and Kurdish language.

The media outlets only quoted one part of Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus speech "in sight" and ignoring other important part which he stated, "We are not there yet" and turning it into a headline has changed the entire original content. The missing part neither mentioned in the headline nor the lead as well.

Disseminating "end of COVID-19" on some of the Iraqi media outlets and social media will negatively have a significant impact on taking any preventative measures such as wearing masks, social distancing, hygiene, and most importantly on getting COVID-19 vaccines, since the rate of overall vaccine uptake in Iraq is still under 20%. The news stirs reassurance among Iraqi communities despite the continuing dangers. In addition, that will have an impact of increasing vaccine hesitancy and slowing the process of COVID-19 vaccination in Iraq.

Publishing these sorts of content online will create bigger gaps of distrust and losing credibility between media outlets and audiences. Despite of existed rumours, the community members in Iraq still scrutinize the pandemic situation especially since the weather is changing and winter approaches, along with constant checking of the announcements of the Ministry of Health in Iraq and Kurdistan, which contain the number of the affected cases and deaths of COVID-19.

Fact-checking



- ◆ The fact is, on September 2022 ,14, the World Health Organization director Mr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus announced that " Last week, the number of weekly reported deaths from COVID-19 was the lowest since March 2020.We have never been in a better position to end the pandemic" he did not state that COVID-19 pandemic has ended.
- ◆ The World Health Organization director's speech reveals that the ending of COVID-19 is visible, but we are still facing risks of COVID-19, again it shows that COVID-19 effects has not ended yet "We are not there yet, but the end is in sight"
- ◆ Below link shows the full statement of WHO director on the latest COVID-19 situation: "WHO Director-General's opening remarks at the media briefing-14 September 2022."
<https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing--14-september-2022>
- ◆ The number of infected people among the Iraqi communities is still increasing , according to WHO, Iraq has reported 2,460,318 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 25,356 confirmed death cases as of the beginning of the pandemic until September 2022.



Recommendations

- ◆ Journalists should use quotes to show the exact words of the original speaker and to show how it was said.
- ◆ Citation should be accurate otherwise it will lose authenticity, journalist should be aware of citing quotation, changes must not be applied.
- ◆ Partial quotation can create and lead to misinformation and disinformation, do not choose one side of the quotation and ignore the other part. A full-sentence quote presents an entire quoted sentence.
- ◆ Quoting a sentence that contains contrasts (coordinating conjunction) should contain both parts.
- ◆ If you cite or quote any sources, make sure not to change the meaning and context by cutting and twisting the sentences to attract social media audience's attention.
- ◆ Journalists and media outlets should not publish an abstract information or headlines only for any reasons. The full article and details should be attached to the headline for showing the whole picture, otherwise, it creates misleading and mis/disinformation.
- ◆ There is always new research on health issues, therefore, it is important to provide dates and sources within your piece of work on any health subject, so that the audiences do not generalize the fact and information
- ◆ Breaking news should be followed by details and full coverage not only an abstract headline, otherwise, it will create misinformation.
- ◆ Journalists should show restraint before publishing any new journalistic materials.

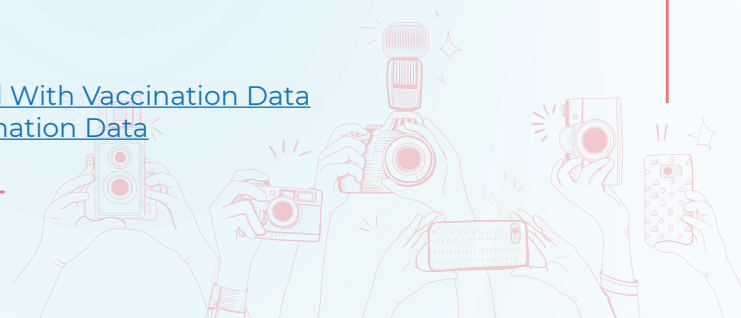
Tips for Journalists:



- ◆ It is essential that journalists provide authentic information and use clear language and headlines. The headline must be factually accurate, easy to understand, and in line with the article's content.
- ◆ A piece of news should be always a verified fact. It is important to fact-check the information and data with relevant authorities, such as the Ministry of Health and WHO, before publishing them.
- ◆ Do not fall into misinformation, keep your data clear and authentic. Investigate the data and information on health issues thoroughly, 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.
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ Fact-checking is a must in health reporting to ensure the spread of accurate information to local communities and vulnerable groups.

Useful Sources for Journalists:

- ◆ [Health Journalism Network - Internews](#)
- ◆ [End of COVID pandemic is 'in sight' -WHO chief |Reuters](#)
- ◆ [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(cdc.gov\)](#)
- ◆ [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#)
- ◆ [Iraq: WHO Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\) Dashboard With Vaccination Data](#)
[| WHO Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Dashboard With Vaccination Data](#)



This bulletin is made possible by the support of the American People through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the sole responsibility of Internews and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



Internews
Local voices. Global change.



**Rooted
in Trust**



Tech For Peace
It ends with us



BCF
BARZANI CHARITY FOUNDATION



KIRKUKNOW
From People To People