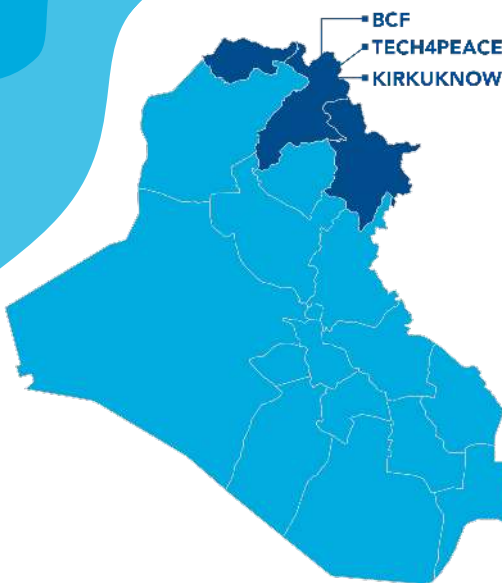


Introduction to Rooted in Trust

Rooted in Trust (RiT) is an Internews project supporting humanitarian and public health agencies in tackling rumors and misinformation about COVID-19. In this bulletin, Internews examines common rumors found on social media in northern Iraq during February 2022.

This bulletin aims at providing the communities and those working with them with the latest rumor data identified among internally displaced populations in northern Iraq with the aim of better guiding and informing risk communication and community engagement efforts within the health response.

Rooted in Trust (RiT) is a project run 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. 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 ultimate goal of disrupting and mitigating the flow of misleading and inaccurate information.

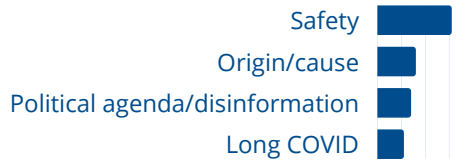


About This Bulletin

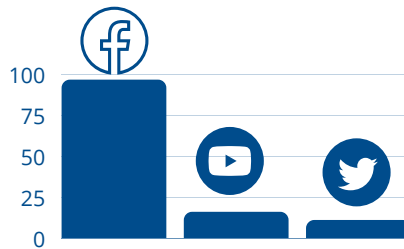
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Top Rumor Themes



Rumor Sources



Methodology

In Iraq RiT 2.0 collects, manage and address 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 fact-checking process, rumors go through categorization, qualitative and quantitative data analyzing and then producing products to be shared with target population.

COVID-19 situation overview in the country

In February 2022, there have been around 90,000 confirmed cases in Iraq and 500 deaths. 16% of the population are fully vaccinated and 24% received at least one dose of the vaccine. WHO conducted a mass SMS campaign targeting governorates with the lowest vaccine uptake according to Ministry of Health (MoH) data. Text messages included frequently asked questions, health facts, information about the vaccines, and prevention measures in Arabic and Kurdish languages (2)

16,476,263
Doses Administered

500
Death

90,000
COVID-19 Cases

Rumor #1

Treatment and Cure

Fact Checking

- ✓ In February, a rumor has been spread among various media outlets and social media platforms that an older woman from a district near the Duhok governorate was suffered from vision loss two weeks after receiving her COVID-19 vaccine. No other cases of vision loss after vaccination have occurred since the start of the vaccination process in Iraq or elsewhere in the world. The deputy of Kurdistan MoH, Dr. Rahel Faraidon, stated that "there is no link between losing your eyesight and COVID-19 vaccines".
- ✓ There is no connection between the vaccination and the woman's loss of vision, which was occurred due to a medical condition and is not connected. It is to be expected that people will experience normal, unrelated medical issues and may incorrectly assume that these issues are linked to vaccinations. However, the individual case that occurred in IKR doesn't suggest any link between the case and the vaccine, and is in fact a coincidence in timing.
- ✓ According to the United States Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and WHO, the vast majority of vaccine side effects are mild and are normal signs that your body is building protection." They do not include eye- or vision-related symptoms.(3) (4)
There are no confirmed cases of people losing vision or having their eyesight affected after being vaccinated.

"The vaccines might affect your eyesight and cause blindness"

Published in Kurdish language on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok – over 20K views, 50 shares, and 200 comments.

Recommendations for outreach workers and communities

- The COVID-19 vaccine is the best way to protect ourselves and our families. Therefore, IDPs and host community members can receive vaccines through this link Vaccine pre-registration (gov.krd). There is no specific requirement from IKR for IDPs to take the vaccine.

- For anyone who has concerns or questions about the vaccine and possible side effects, it is important to receive information from reliable sources such as the KRG MoH medical workers, and medical centers inside each camp.

- Avoid unreliable sources and unverified social media accounts that may spread misleading and wrong information, instead reach out to Mobile Vaccine team that provides accurate information on vaccination process. These teams are also based in dedicated caravans inside medical clinics in each camp.

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Corona

Sources

1. <https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus/country/iraq>
2. COVID-19 RISK AND AWARENESS MESSAGES | HumanitarianResponse
3. <https://www.allaboutvision.com/coronavirus/covid-vaccine-side-effects-vision/>
4. <https://www.yalemedicine.org/news/coronavirus-vaccine-blood-clots>
5. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/expect/after.html>

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**



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