About This Bulletin

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 March 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.

Introduction to Rooted in Trust

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.

Top Rumor Themes

- Political Agenda
- Variants
- Endemic
- Other
- Origin/Cause

Rumor Sources

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Other

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.

COVID-19 situation overview in the country

On March 14th, the Iraqi Civil Aviation Authority announced that it will follow the decisions taken by the health authorities to ease COVID-19 restrictions on travellers arriving in or leaving Iraq starting April 1st. The Iraqi Higher Committee for Health and National Safety has decided that all travellers who have been vaccinated against COVID-19 only need to submit a certificate of receiving two doses of vaccines, and no longer need to take PCR test.

On March 31st, the Iraqi Ministry of Health reported the total number of COVID-19 infections reached 2,319,550, an increase of 2,422 from the 2,317,128 reported on March 24. Ministry data indicated that there were 26 new COVID-19 deaths in the last week of March, bringing the total from 25,138 to 25,164. To date, Iraq has tested a total of 18,336,480 samples for COVID-19. The number of people who received the COVID-19 vaccine reached 10,352,610, (which is %18) including 30,553 who received their shots on March 31.

- 17,778,382 Doses Administered
- 175 Death
- 16,757 COVID-19 Cases
For anyone who wants to know the up-to-date data on the COVID-19 virus, it is important to receive information and data from reliable sources such as WHO, the Iraqi Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Health-KRG.

Since the source of this rumor is a Facebook post, remind communities to identify the source of information and compare the information presented across different sources to ensure that it is true and based on facts.

Develop social media posts and conduct outreach activities to inform communities that COVID-19 continues in Iraq and that protective measures and vaccination are still important.

Health and outreach workers should explain that the pandemic is still a danger. Referring to the WHO and government data, they should remind communities that there are still many people who get infected by the virus on a daily basis.

Health care and community outreach works should explain that the Russian invasion of Ukraine has a sharp impact on Iraq’s economy, including shortages of food in Iraq and forcing the government to pay more in gasoline subsidies. And this was one of the reasons behind the media’s focus on the war.

Important Links and Helplines:
- MOH KRI website: www.gov.krd/moh/
- Corona hotline: 122

Sources
1. https://covid19.who.int/
3. https://www.facebook.com/MOH.GOV.IQ