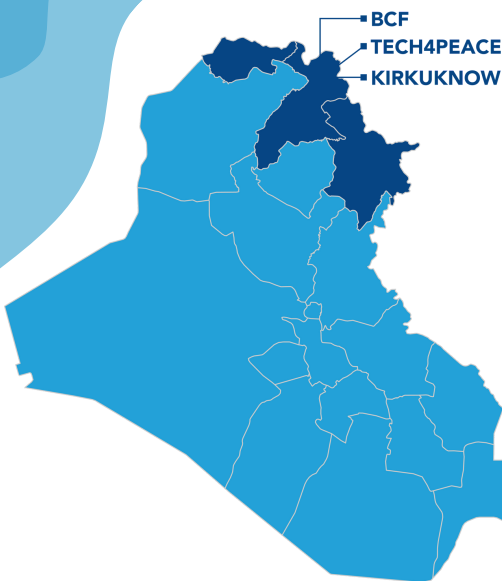


Introduction to Rooted in Trust

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.



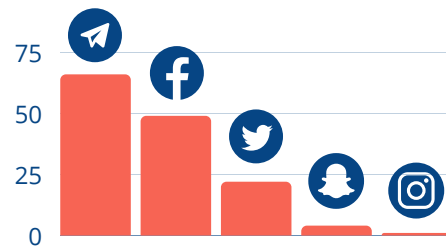
About This Bulletin

This bulletin provides humanitarian and health partners 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 May 2022. In total, 241 rumors have been collected. They have been categorized as 77 medium-risk, and 164 low-risk levels. 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



Rumor Sources

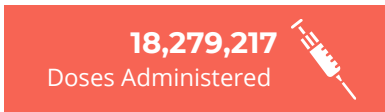


Methodology

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

According to the WHO, the total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Iraq till 31 May reached 22,328,019. In addition, 8 deaths have been reported during May, in Iraq. There is a low vaccination rate in Iraq, which is until the end of May 2022, the vaccination rate is 18.6%. Monkeypox virus rumors spread around the country, especially linking the virus to the negative COVID-19 vaccine side effects, which causes vaccine hesitancy among those who did not take the vaccine. Iraq RiT team identified 30 rumors which link Monkeypox to COVID-19 Vaccine. There have been zero cases of Monkeypox in Iraq. Iraqi MoH has released new regulations in regards to Monkeypox to all health directorates stating that there is no vaccine nor medicine to cure those who catch the virus.



Rumor #1

Theme: Product development/
manufacturing

Fact Checking

- ✓ **Dr. Hazha Hushyar, Primary Health Care in Ministry of Health-KRG** stated that the manufacturing of vaccines depends on the companies and the emergency of the situation for COVID-19 vaccines as it is a complex science due to urgent situations and adjusting the safety of the vaccine to be provided.
- ✓ **Dr. Aso Karim Director of Preventive Health Directorate in Ministry of Health Kurdistan** mentioned that this rumor is incorrect and stated that "First COVID-19 vaccine has been registered in 2020, and Pfizer which is one of the vaccine types we use in Iraq and Kurdistan Region was available for use in Europe and US in 2021, therefore COVID-19 vaccine did not take 15 years to be produced.
- ✓ According to WHO, as of 22 May 2022, almost one billion people in lower-income countries have not received the vaccine. Only 57 countries have vaccinated 70% of their population – mainly high-income countries. WHO reiterates that a fair distribution of the vaccine should be provided across the globe starting with the most vulnerable. The target is to reach 70% coverage in each country while ensuring 100% of those aged over 60; 100% of health workers; and 100% of those with underlying health conditions[1]

Source

1. COVID-19 vaccines (who.int)



“Did you know that in order to produce one billion vaccines, they have to produce 2,739,726 vaccines a day? Now that 70% of the world's population has been vaccinated once to three times, at least 15 billion vaccines have been produced. Therefore, at least for the past 15 years, they have been producing a vaccine for a disease that did not even exist. Think and figure it out for yourself”

Posted in Kurdish on a Facebook public account. It had a total of 302 engagements including (259 likes, 43 comments, and 1 share)

Recommendations

for outreach workers and communities

- Community organizations should coordinate with MoH to receive the latest updates on vaccine figures and developments, this can be done by contacting 066122 hotline number or visiting **Primary Health Care Department in the Ministry of Health Kurdistan**.
- For people living in camps contact the BCF health department for further detailed information by visiting camp management for further information and the vaccination process.
- Conducting training to active local health care providers who work inside camps about misinformation impact of vaccine hesitancy, and how to respond to people's concerns through activities and face-to-face conversation.



Rumor #2

Theme: Safety/Side Effects



“Until now, I didn't take the vaccine because I have thyroid disease. That's why I'm afraid of taking the vaccine”

This rumor was collected in a listening group session by a female in the IDP camps in the Erbil governorate.

Fact Checking

✓ The thyroid is a small organ located in the front of the neck, which creates and releases substances that help the body to regulate the body's metabolic rate-controlling heart, muscle, and digestive function, brain development, and bone maintenance also making hormones that help to control many vital functions of the body.

✓ There is no evidence that COVID-19 vaccines cause complications for people with thyroid disease. However, COVID-19 infection can cause complications in people with thyroid disease, so it is especially important to get vaccinated. Dr. Jaafar Tahir Barzani, a local specialized Thyroid doctor stated, “Any person with thyroid disease can take COVID-19 vaccine safely, we faced many COVID-19 patients during the pandemic that they developed thyroid abnormalities due to COVID-19 virus, but very rarely faced post-vaccination thyroid”.

Recommendations

for outreach workers and communities

- Health and community organizations should be aware of questions related to thyroid disease and COVID-19 and should include them in awareness sessions especially for women as they are at a higher risk of getting infected.

- Heevie Organization[2] is an active health service provider in Hassan sham U3 Camps and they can be reached five days a week in the camp, they provide services on antenatal care & postnatal care with family planning for the female IDP community members. Therefore, camp management and other local NGOs should encourage women within camps, to seek accurate information from Heevie Organization or any other active actors inside camps. On the other hand, local partners with the health service provider must organize sessions for women in coordination with Heevie Organization to respond to the concerns of community members specifically for women.



Source

Rumor #3

Theme: Vaccine Agenda

Fact Checking

- ✓ There have been no recorded cases of Monkeypox in Iraq.
- ✓ Monkeypox is not a new disease. It was first discovered in 1958, The first human case of Monkeypox was recorded in 1970 in the Democratic Republic of Congo during a period of intensified effort to eliminate smallpox. Since then, Monkeypox has been reported in humans in other central and western African countries up to date in 12 countries.
- ✓ The Smallpox vaccine – which also prevents monkeypox – was introduced in 1796. It was the first vaccine to be invented. Since the eradication of smallpox in 1980, it is no longer used and specific monkeypox vaccines are used instead.
- ✓ The Iraqi Ministry of Health issued on Thursday, May 26th, the latest developments about the Monkeypox virus. A member of the Ministry's medical team, Ruba Falah, indicated that it is transmitted through contact between animals and humans, noting that there is no cure and that symptoms include high fever, headaches, muscle pain, and swollen lymph glands.[3]
- ✓ The Monkeypox virus, which belongs to the same family of viruses as smallpox, is currently spreading around the globe by tick bites, contact with infected animal tissues, and contact with infected people. Pfizer has not created a Monkeypox vaccine.

122 Corona

Source

3. <https://www.shafaq.com/en/Iraq-News/Iraqi-MoH-issues-statement-about-hemorrhagic-fever-and-Monkeypox>



USAID



Internews



Rooted in Trust



BCF



“People, get yourselves ready: Before the Monkeypox virus spread, they prepared a vaccine!! This means they are spreading diseases and they want to control people and the population of the earth under the name of vaccines. Please, please, no one should get vaccinated. This is not a vaccine, and it is to kill people. It is based on mRNA to change human genes and control humans. I got this information from the CDC website. This information was published on: July 17, 2021, back when they had not yet spread the disease. Now it is clear to you that they spread the disease themselves!! Otherwise, how could they develop a vaccine for a disease that has not yet spread....!! ”

Posted in Kurdish on a Facebook public account. It had a total of 410 engagements on Facebook (319 likes, 73 comments, and 18 shares)

Recommendations for outreach workers and communities

News and rumors about Monkeypox are actively spreading amongst community members, causing fear and confusion about its history, symptoms, and prevention measures. Partners should work on raising awareness through engaging activities such as conducting some Q/A sessions, listening groups, and having a specialized doctor discuss the basic symptoms and prevention of the transmitted viruses inside camps, in order to share information with camp residents and respond to their concerns.

Although Monkeypox is not an aerosol, and is less transmissible than COVID-19, it can still spread by respiratory droplets, which require closer contact. Therefore masking, good airflow, sanitation, and physical distancing (measures that will also protect people against COVID-19) will protect you from Monkeypox infection and prevent Monkeypox transmission in your community.

Health department of camp management (BCF health clinics) and other available health service providers such as Heevie organization and Adventist Help[1] that work inside camps should conduct engagement activities and set a plan to prevent the way of spreading out information on Monkeypox and clarify that there is no link between Monkeypox and COVID-19 vaccine side effects.

Building a good relationship and communication among local health partners inside camps and IKR MoH, to receive trainings to recognize the symptoms of the disease and how to refer them to the official health authorities for proper examination or isolation to reduce the spread of the virus.

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

