"INFORMATION DEPRIVATION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC"

An Information Ecosystem Assessment of Internally Displaced Persons in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq During the COVID-19 Pandemic.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

BCF
Barzani Charity Foundation

CMC
Communication and Media Commission

COVID-19
Coronavirus Disease 2019

CPA
Coalition Provisional Authority

FGD
Focus Group Discussion

IDP
Internally Displaced Person

IMN
Iraqi Media Network

IOM
International Organization for Migration

ISJ
Iraqi Syndicates of Journalists

JCC
Joint Crisis Coordination

KDP
Kurdistan Democratic Party

KII
Key Informant Interview

KRG
Kurdistan Regional Government

KRI
Kurdistan Region of Iraq

NGO
Non-Governmental Organization

OCHA
United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

PFAA
Press Freedom Advocacy Association

PUK
Patriotic Union of Kurdistan

RCCE
Risk Communication and Community Engagement

UNICEF
United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

WHO
World Health Organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Information Ecosystem Assessment (IEA) discusses the information dynamics amongst Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) residing in camps in Iraqi Kurdistan during the COVID-19 pandemic. The focal concern of the IEA is the information supply and demand landscape looking specifically at how communities find, produce, consume, and share information from different sources and the barriers they encounter in doing so.

The study was conducted against the backdrop of significant political events and armed conflict which, taken together, have transformed contemporary Iraq, particularly in the flow of information[1]. In the first instance, the information supply landscape is polarized along sectarian, ethnic, and political lines. The focus on IDPs was deliberate because they are often invisible within the media and are excluded from the production and dissemination of information that impinges on health-seeking practices.

In line with the Internews IEA methodology, the study adopted a participatory, mixed methodological approach that combined both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The study used key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), and a community survey to gather data at four camps, namely Hassan Sham U3, Khazer, Baharka, and Harsham.

The report makes the following key findings:

■ Information deprivation, a sense of abandonment and exclusion, and a lack of trust in government institutions have gradually led to an environment that is almost immune to facts within the camps. Vaccine hesitancy is high and rumors and misinformation about COVID-19 are rife. For instance, there are pervasive beliefs that vaccines kill people or cause infertility.

■ The perceived general lack of interest by the federal government in effectively addressing the long and protracted displacement of tens of thousands of people living in limbo without knowledge about their future and the lack of engagement of IDPs in an informative dialogue regarding a safe and dignified return process to their area of origin, has driven IDPs to seek information from unvetted sources such as Facebook posts and other social media platforms, or from relatives, friends and each other, often seeing rumors and misinformation as credible facts.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the key findings made in the report, the following recommendations can be suggested to the government, media, and international and local NGOs to improve the information ecosystem amongst IDP communities.

To the Government:

- There is a need to restore IDPs' trust and to do so, the government should work to increase trust and address IDPs' most urgent and most relevant information needs. The Government must increase its presence inside the camps and engage the displaced population in active, informative, and regular dialogue about their essential questions – primarily around safe and voluntary returns, the security situation in their area of origin, and the compensation process for their destroyed homes. Knowing answers to these questions is not only a fundamental right of all IDPs but also is integral to achieving a full understanding of their current conditions.

- There is a need for the government to improve service provision with the camps, such as the provision of electricity. The supply of sufficient electricity is essential for all IDP households, not only for dealing with the extreme weather conditions in the summer and winter seasons but also for accessing information.

To the Media:

- Iraqi National Media should devote more attention to IDPs by increasing their coverage and reporting on their main issues and human stories. In addition to that, the media (especially the TV channels) in coordination with government and humanitarian actors, should launch awareness campaigns to combat COVID-19 and health misinformation inside the camps.

To International Organizations:

- UN agencies, international, and local NGOs, should view the need for information as an essential aid that must be delivered just like food, water, medical and other needs.

To Communities and Community Leaders:

- Community leaders, especially religious leaders, should address the spread of the rumors inside the camps, and speak out more about the benefits of receiving vaccinations.

- As IDPs gradually ignore COVID-19's seriousness, neglecting preventive measures, and showing a lack of interest, the government and NGOs must return to, and re-increase their presence, in the camps, with reactivation of awareness campaigns, reminding the camp population that COVID-19 is still here, and it is not something from the past.

- NGOs should improve the communication strategies with IDP populations, especially feedback and complaints mechanisms; encourage participation and seek creative ways to engage IDPs in their programming. Dumping information in the camps and leaving, without establishing an effective dialogue and involving IDPs, will contribute to more confusion, not to a better and clearer understanding.

1. INTRODUCTION

This Information Ecosystem Assessment (IEA) details the information dynamics amongst Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) residing in camps in Iraqi Kurdistan during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, the IEA explores the information supply and demand landscape- at both national and community levels- focusing on how communities find, produce, consume, and share information from different sources and the barriers they encounter in doing so.

Contemporary Iraq has been profoundly impacted and reshaped by the political instability and armed conflicts that have engulfed the country periodically since the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003.[2] The information supply landscape is polarized along sectarian, ethnic, and political lines reflecting the divisions in Iraqi society.[3] Despite media reforms aimed at promoting free speech, the culture of controlling information suppliers by the authorities and political parties is prevalent and pervasive. Prominent politicians and political parties own, or strongly dominate the media sector and decide which topics receive more coverage than others.

Cast against this background are Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) that have not been actively engaged or involved in the production of media products, published, and disseminated by Iraqi media organizations. The Iraqi national media and the information suppliers, in general, have not devoted enough attention and work to IDPs' needs and issues. The lack of attention to IDPs has led to their sense of exclusion and abandonment and the 'invisibility' of IDPs was worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, the Iraqi authorities locked down IDP camps as part of the COVID-19 containment measures. The camps were established in 2014 across the country and intended to host people fleeing the war after the Islamic States' (ISIS) invasion of Iraq's second-largest city, Mosul, and other cities in Anbar, Saladin, and other governorates.[4] By the end of 2021, the major IDP camps were closed in all Iraqi governorates, except for camps located inside the Kurdistan Region and a few other camps in the Nineveh plains.[5] The remaining open camps in KRI hosted 180,000 IDPs who lived in overcrowded conditions with limited access to health care, lack of sanitation, and limited access to trustworthy and reliable information. The lockdown of camps and movement restrictions led to confusion, a flood of misinformation, the spread of rumors, and a lack of trustworthy information, and this impeded people's ability to cope with the pandemic, especially at the beginning of the lockdown.

2. RESEARCH SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Philosophy and Methodological Principles

Internews undertakes Information Ecosystem Assessments (IEA) to better understand unique and localized information needs, gaps, sources, and patterns of access and use. Information Ecosystem Assessments offer an analytical framework to capture all dimensions of the relationship between information consumers and information supply. Gaining insights into these dynamics allows us to design projects that meet people where they are to deliver information through the channels, platforms, formats, or people that they prefer and trust. Our IEA research is predicated on four key principles that lie at the core of our methodological approach:

1. *Putting the community at the core of the research:* Internews strives to be at the center of the communities that it serves. As such we endeavor to have the community itself do a large part of the research and this entails that communities select the research questions and collaboratively identify the relevant stakeholders.

2. *Following a human centered research design:* The IEA seeks a holistic understanding of people's information practices. We understand demand and supply in a broad sense, not narrowly focused on media outlets or traditional media actors. Our scope of analysis is defined by how people actually access and consume information and not by pre-defined categories. We strive to understand both which practices are broadly shared and what are the specific needs and behaviors of groups, especially the most vulnerable ones.

3. *Marrying qualitative and quantitative data:* We seek to combine different types of data to best understand both the supply and demand of information and how the two interact to produce a dynamic ecosystem. We go beyond traditional mapping and audience surveys. Our IEAs rely heavily on a qualitative approach: understanding information practices requires getting up close and personal to people to figure out the best ways to reach them with good information.

4. *Integrating research and action:* We do not see Information Ecosystem Assessments as an "end product". They are most often the first stage of our project design, providing invaluable context and a way to build a trusting relationship with the community we hope to work with. They are always connected to recommended actions, whether our own, those undertaken by the communities, or by our partners and other key stakeholders in the ecosystem.

2. RESEARCH SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

2.2 Data Collection

In tandem with the IEA methodological approach, data collection was conducted in four camps and including Hassan Sham U3, Khazer, Baharka, and Harsham. The study used a number of research techniques to gather data, and these are discussed below:
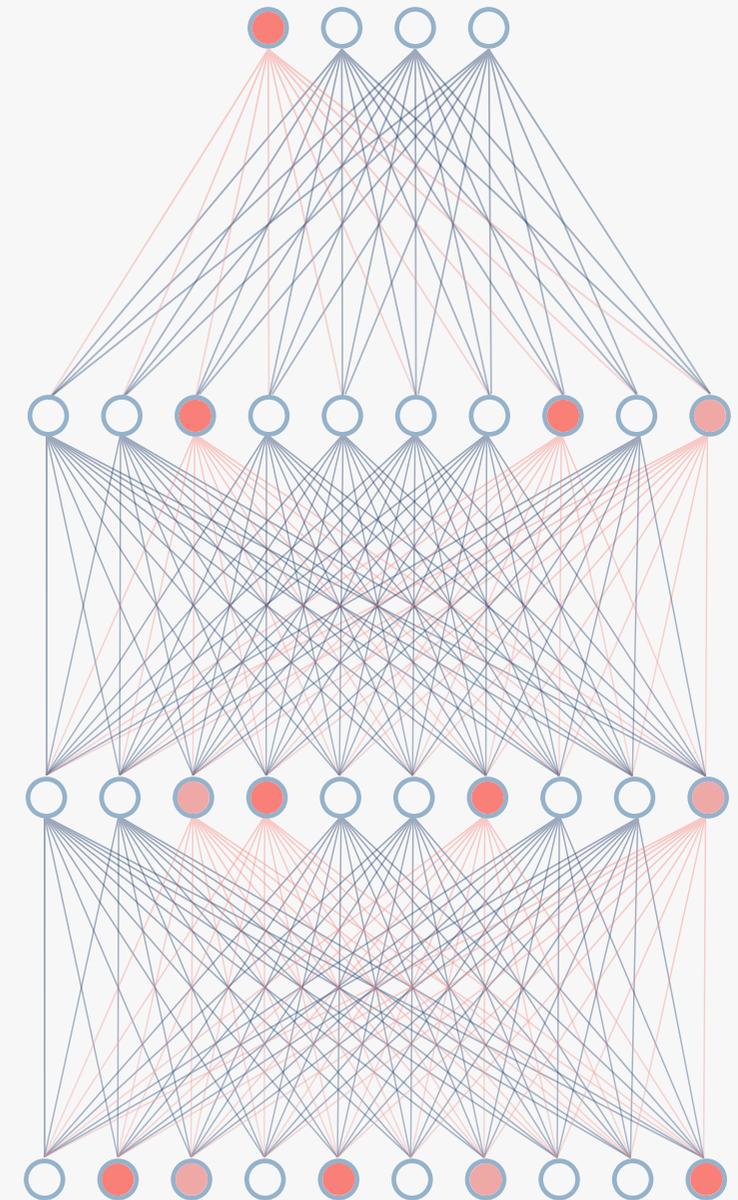
Community Survey

A survey tool was the main data-gathering tool that was used. The tool sought to find out, from the perspectives of the participants, their information needs with regard to COVID-19, how they access information relating to the pandemic, and how much they trusted the information that they received.

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

A total of 9 key informant interviews (KI) were conducted and participants were drawn from community leaders (2), media (2), International organizations (2), a government official, and two civil society organizations representatives. In these KIIs, the researchers sought to find out how different institutions were communicating about COVID-19 to different communities, the extent of community engagement in the pandemic response plans, and how and in what ways information or messaging around COVID-19 could be improved.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

A total of three FGDs were conducted. In the FGDs researchers solicited data on how communities accessed information, the challenges they encountered in doing so, and the sources of information they found trustworthy.

2. RESEARCH SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

Interviews		
Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)	3	
Survey	177	Hassan Sham U3 (n. 34.5% ,61) participants. Khazer (n.23.7% ,42) participants. Baharka (n.21.5% ,38) participants. Hasan Sham U2 (n.11.3% ,20) participants. Harsham (n.9% ,16) participants
Key Informant Interviews	2	
Key Informant Interviews	2	
Key Informant Interviews	2	
Key Informant Interviews	1	
Key Informant Interviews	2	

2. RESEARCH SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

2.3 Research Challenges and Limitations

There were some limitations and challenges encountered in conducting the study and these were as follows:

1. The study was limited by time constraints. It was produced within a timeframe of three months, and this encompassed the first stage of desk research, from data collection to report writing.

2. *Fieldwork Challenges:* Due to the focus of the study specifically on the IDP community in KRI, the sampling approach for both qualitative and quantitative was based on convenience sampling. FGD and survey participants were selected through the network of Internews' partner organizations on the ground.

3. Pandemic fatigue: One of the primary challenges faced in conducting the field research, specifically the survey, was the initial poor response it received from the target community mainly due to its COVID-19-related questions. Through FGDs and one-to-one talks, people repeatedly showed a lack of interest in addressing anything related to the pandemic, considering the disease as something that no longer presented a major threat.

4. Survey fatigue: IDP communities living in formal camps in KRI are challenging to approach due to their protracted displacement, and their sense of being used with no benefits in return.

3. COUNTRY PROFILE

3.1 Country Profile Indicators

Press Related Index	Civil liberties *(including freedom of expression)*	13/60
	Political Rights	16/40
	Press freedom index 2021 *(out of 180 countries)*	163
	Press freedom index 2022 *(out of 180 countries)*	172

* Source civil rights: [freedom house](#) global freedom status ** Source index ranking: [Reporters without borders](#)

Freedom on the net	Obstacles to access	11/25
	Limits on content	16/35
	Violation of user rights	14/40
	Freedom on the net score 2021	41/100

* Source: [Freedom house](#) freedom on the net

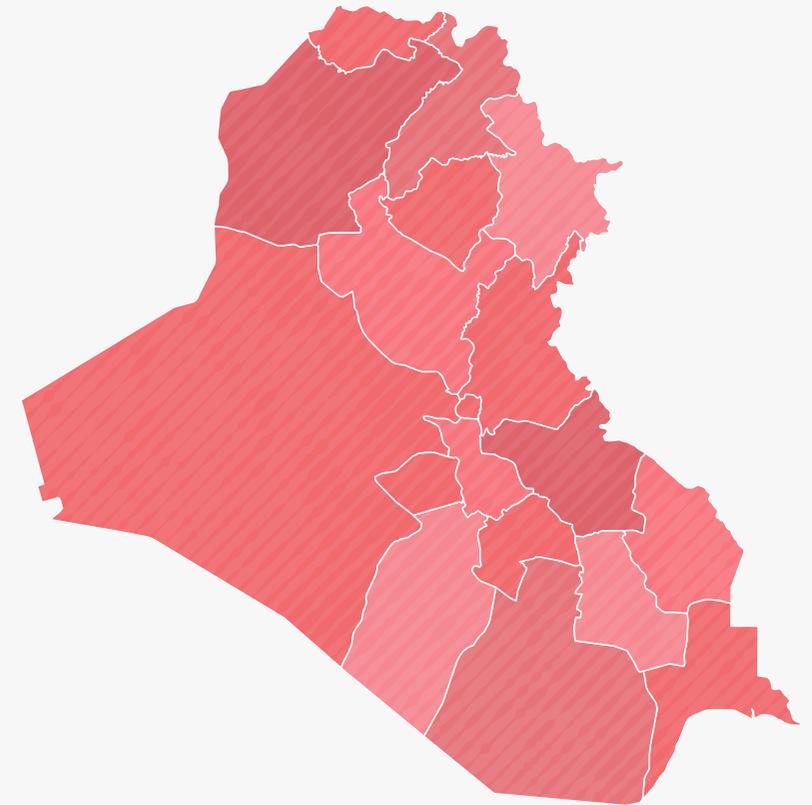| COVID-19 As of June 30, 2022	Confirmed cases	2,348,662
	Deaths	25,241

3. COUNTRY PROFILE

Iraq has an estimated population of 40 million people with the majority being Arab Muslims with the 75% of the total population. It is one of the most culturally diverse nations in the Middle East with Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen, Assyrians, Yazidis, Sabian Mandeans, and Shabaks among others. Each group speaks its own language and preserves its cultural identities, and most have their own media outlets. The official language of the country is Arabic and Kurdish.[6]

For the last few decades, Iraq has been through multiple crises that have severely affected everyday life including the production, dissemination, and reception of information. After the 2003 war and the fall of Saddam Hussain's regime, the Iraqi information supply landscape was rapidly and forcibly transformed into diversity and openness for the first time in over 45 years since the fall of the monarchy in 1958. The country went from one "where satellite dishes were completely banned to one where almost every household has one."[7] The new emerging Iraqi media was profoundly impacted and reshaped by the political instability and armed conflicts that engulfed the country periodically. As a result, the information supply landscape, and its contents and news coverage gradually became more polarized.[8]

Despite the relative freedom and diversity that the Iraqi information supply landscape currently enjoys, journalists and media activists face enormous challenges that aim at curtailing the freedom of expression. Repressive government measures, ambiguous and redundant press laws, sectarian tensions, militias, and radical armed groups such as the Islamic State (ISIS), and threats and assassinations that target activists and journalists make Iraq one of the most hostile environments for media workers.

According to the Press Freedom Advocacy Association (PFAA,) an Iraqi press watchdog, 2019 was a "setback year" for media in Iraq. In that year alone, PFAA recorded 373 cases of assaults against journalists all over Iraq, with over 100 cases in the capital Baghdad alone. The cases included assassinations, death threats, kidnapping, detentions, physical assaults, as well as media outlet closures.

4. INFORMATION SUPPLY: INFORMATION PROVIDERS LANDSCAPE REVIEW

4.1 Media Providers

Before the US-led operationof 2003, the media landscape in Iraq was extremely poor with only 5 newspapers, 4 radios, and 3 television channels, all fully controlled by the state, abiding by the one party's ideology and limited to one news network agency called Iraqi News Agency. The fall of the regime led to an unprecedented proliferation in the number of media outlets, and the expansion of the space of freedom. Less than a year after the fall of the previous regime "over 200 newspapers had begun publishing, in addition to around 80 radio stations and 20 television channels."[9] However, many of these outlets soon went out of business due to economic constraints.

The Ministry of Information which was in control of all media outlets during the previous regime was dissolved. In March 2004, L. Paul Bremer III, the Administrator of the then Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), a transitional government body established following the US-led operation, issued order 65 which established the Communication and Media Commission (CMC) regulating and transformed the state media into independent public service broadcaster. Order 65 grants "the CMC exclusive authority to license and regulate telecommunications, broadcasting and information services in Iraq."[10]

The practice of controlling media outlets by the authorities and political parties is, however, still prevalent. This desire for control became clearer after the CPA handed over the power to Iraqis in 2004. Political parties, especially the Islamists such as Islamic Dawa Party, staffed the board of CMC with their own partisan people, somewhat restoring political control over the media, especially over the new public broadcaster, the Iraqi Media Network (IMN).[11] Despite the efforts and regulations to develop a free and independent media, the post-2003 media was established along sectarian, ethnic, and political lines reflecting the divisions of Iraqi society. In the Kurdistan region in the north the new media landscape, established in 1991, was and still is mainly controlled by the two main ruling parties; the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriot Union of Kurdistan (PUK.) In Erbil the capital, the ruling KDP controls the major media networks such as Rudaw and Kurdistan 24, while in Sulaymaniyah, the PUK operates Kurdsat, Geli Kurdistan, Xandan, and other media outlets. Other smaller parties each run their own print, radio, and TV communications.

4. INFORMATION SUPPLY: INFORMATION PROVIDERS LANDSCAPE REVIEW

Today's Iraqi news consumers watch TV news channels more than read newspapers. A 2012 survey by International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX) revealed that about 61% of the Iraqi population have deserted reading newspapers, while 97% of them get their news from national TV channels.[12] The large number of newspapers that emerged in the early years of media openness after 2003 has plummeted. Currently, several newspapers continue to be published. Except for Az-Zamman, which is owned by the owner and founder of Al-Sharqiya TV, Saad Al-Bazzaz, all other newspapers came to light after April 2003. The daily Al-Sabah is the official newspaper issued by IMN, and Al-Zawra is published by the Journalists' syndicate. Also, there are newspapers that are published by political parties such as Tareeq Al-Shaa'b which is published by the Iraqi Communist Party, Kurdistani New, published in the Kurdish language by the PUK, and At-taakhi published in Arabic by KDP. And amongst privately owned, and independent newspapers are Hawlati, Awene, Published in the Kurdish language, and Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed, Kul Al- Akhbar, AL-Sharq.[13]

Most of the Iraqi population consumes information through TV. According to a 2016 Gallup poll, television remains the most popular media source for Iraqis, as almost 90% trust news "strongly or somehow" on the TV platform.[14] There are over a hundred Iraqi TV channels broadcasting in Arabic, Kurdish, Turkmen, and Syriac languages. Except for the federally operated Al-Iraqiya, which is the main TV channel of the IMN, all other channels run privately. Many of them are controlled by political parties.

In Baghdad and the majority of Shai south, most of the TV channels are owned by Shai Islamist political parties. For example, Al-Ahad TV is owned by Asaib Ahl al-Haq, which is a militia group with close ties to Iran. Al-Afaq TV is owned by the Islamic Dawa Party, Al-Ghadeer TV belongs to Badr Organization, and many other channels are owned by the Shia groups. In the majority Sunni western part of the country, Sunni-owned TV channels are more popular and enjoy more viewership. TV channels that are owned by Sunni groups and individuals include, but are not limited to, Al-Sharqiya, owned by the Sunni businessman

Saa'd al-Bazzaz, Al-Fallujah and UTV both owned by the Sunni politician and businessman Khamis Al-Khanjar, and other channels.[15,16]

In Erbil, north of the country, KDP politicians, and specifically members of the ruling Barzani family, own major TV channels. Rudaw, founded in 2013, is owned by the President of KRI, Nechirvan Barzani, while Kurdistan24 is owned by his cousin, the region's Prime Minister Masrour Barzani.

In Sulaymaniyah, the PUK operates Kurdsat and Gali Kurdistan, while Shaswar Abdul-Wahid, the leader of the opposition party New Generation, owns Nalia Media corporation which has the NRT TV channel. Turkmen have established their own TV channels. There are two TV channels in the Turkmen language, one run by the Iraqi Turkmen front called Turkmeneli, which covers mostly the Kirkuk province and other areas inhabited by the Turkmen population, and the other one is the state-run Al-Turkmenia TV.

4. INFORMATION SUPPLY: INFORMATION PROVIDERS LANDSCAPE REVIEW

4.2 Digital Media

According to [DataPortal](#), there were 20.58 million internet users in January of 2022 with 28.35 million social media users, which is equivalent to 68% of the total population. It's important to note that the number of social media users does not represent individuals, but it's based on active user accounts.

Internet freedom is limited in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region, and it's regularly shut down or blocked during political unrest, says a 2021 report issued by Freedom House.[17] During protest movements, both authorities in Baghdad and Erbil regularly block social media sites and restrict messaging apps. For example, during the early stages of the 2019 October protest movement in Baghdad and other cities in the south, authorities blocked social media platforms and messaging apps.[18]

Soon after, the internet was totally shut down as protests escalated and activists and journalists started publishing evidence of targeted killings of peaceful protesters.

Most of the Iraqi Media institutions have an online presence, with an active website and social media pages. There are tens of Arabic and Kurdish news websites and news agencies that only have an online presence such as *Shafaq News, Nas News, Drawmedia, Sharpress, Al-Mustakabal* News Agency, Sot Al-Iraq, and others.

One of the most interesting digital media initiatives is [KirkukNow](#). The project was launched in April 2011 as an independent online news agency that focuses on Kirkuk, a disputed city between Baghdad and Erbil. According to its website, KirkukNow aims to promote coexistence amongst the people living in the disputed areas and to provide easy access to information in the main three languages of the city: Kurdish, Arabic, and Turkmen.

4. INFORMATION SUPPLY: INFORMATION PROVIDERS LANDSCAPE REVIEW

4.3 Social Media

Social media networking sites have grown in popularity in Iraq reaching over 28 million active users. According to the latest statistics published in February 2022 by the independent, non-governmental Iraqi Digital Media Center (DMC), there was a clear increase in the number (3.350 million) of active users compared to the last year's data. Statistics showed that Facebook remains the most popular platform with 18.85 million active users. Other figures were as follows; 15.45 million users on Instagram, 13.8 million users on Snapchat, 1.9 million users on Twitter, and 16.15 million users on the Facebook Messenger applications.[19]

During the 2019 October protest movement against political corruption, social media played a key role in disseminating videos and photos of the protests and human rights abuses committed by the militias and Iraqi authorities.[20]

Most of the activists in Baghdad's Tahrir Square live-streamed and uploaded on their accounts scenes of people being wounded by tear gas canisters or shot dead by live ammunition. Publishing information about what was happening on the ground led the authorities to block social media sites throughout much of the protest movement. On the other hand, Iran-backed armed groups and their armies of trolls disseminate their messages, mostly violent and inflammatory, across a full range of social media platforms. "The most extreme and incendiary rhetoric is mainly reserved for Telegram; online militias purposefully redirect traffic from mainstream platforms like Facebook and Twitter via links to their Telegram channels."[21] Sabreen News, which appeared in early 2020 considered the main Telegram Channel that represents the armed groups, most prominently the Shia group of Asaib Ahl al-Haq. The channel currently has over 210 thousand followers. It was briefly shut down by the government on 28 March and resumed its posting on 8 April.

In Kurdistan, online journalists and activists are routinely detained for expressing their opinions on their social media accounts. The region's Misuse of Communication Devices law has become a "nightmare for journalists."[22]
The law was passed in 2008 to penalize individuals using mobile phones, the internet, and other communication technology to harass people, but it has become a weapon against freedom of expression. For example, in February of 2021, three independent journalists and two civil activists were sentenced to six years in prison after they expressed support for anti-government protests and criticized government corruption on their social media accounts.[23]
Lately, WhatsApp, too, has become a popular tool amongst journalists, and the public in general, to share information and build discussions on groups that function as a media channel.

4. INFORMATION SUPPLY: INFORMATION PROVIDERS LANDSCAPE REVIEW

4.4 Media Journalistic Associations

During Nouri al-Maliki's first premiership (2006-2010), the Iraqi Syndicates of Journalists (ISJ) was accused by journalists of having warm ties with the office of the prime minister. In December of 2008, just a month before the provincial elections, Al-Maliki met with a delegation of Journalists from IJS.[24] According to a piece published on January 27, 2009, in the New York Times Al- Maliki pledged that the government would give lands to thousands of journalists for a little price or possibly even for free in exchange for articles praising "progress and reconstruction."[25] Moaid Al-Lami, who has been the president of the (ISJ) since 2008, was reelected in April 2022 for another four years term.
In January 2013, The National Union of Journalists-Iraq, an independent trade union was founded. Its then President Adnan Hussain identified the Union's main objectives in an interview with a local newspaper stating that the union "will focus mainly on its efforts to push for issuance of a legislation that guarantees the right to obtain information and publish it freely."[26]

Journalists and activists watched their colleagues being banned from converging, threatened, and sometimes assassinated with little reaction and protection from the ISJ. In response to ISJ's failure to function as an independent voice of journalists, Iraqi civil society activists, veteran journalists, young reports, and media students, set up several media associations and organizations. Journalists Freedoms Observatory was established in Baghdad in 2004, with a mission to monitor violations committed against journalists. It also campaigns against laws and legislations aimed at restricting press freedom in Iraq.[27]

Press Freedom Advocacy Association in Iraq (PFAAI) is another independent association that defends the rights of journalists. According to its website, a group of journalists established the association which "defend freedom of opinion, monitor violations against journalists and media professionals."[28]
In the Kurdistan Region, a group of journalists and Human rights activists was established in 2009, with the support of the Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR)[29], Metro Center[30] that monitors the press situation in Kurdistan and advocates for free press.
Most of the Journalistic organizations in Iraq were established and supported by International Non- Governmental Media organizations such as IREX, IWPR, Internews, and others.

4. INFORMATION SUPPLY: INFORMATION PROVIDERS LANDSCAPE REVIEW

4.5 COVID-19 and Iraqi Media

Media in Iraq reported the first case of COVID-19 in February 2020 in a student who had entered the country from Iran.[31] A few months later, on 26 May, the Government confirmed the first case amongst IDP populations in Hassan Sham Camp-U3.[32] As of 6 July 2022, the confirmed cases of COVID-19 reached 2,369,272 cases, with 25,249 confirmed deaths.[33]

Initially, like most of the other countries, Iraqi national media found itself in a confusing and challenging spot due to an unprecedented situation where the flood of information, sometimes conflicting, was overwhelming. Most Iraqi media outlets, including the veteran ones, made mistakes at the beginning of the spread of the virus. There was confusion and lack of clarity in the coverage of the pandemic, which was unlike the armed conflicts and political issues which Iraqi media were used to covering.[34]

On the other hand, the Iraqi authorities used COVID-19 as an excuse to further limit the freedom of the press. For example, in April 2020, Iraq suspended the license of the Reuters news agency after it published a story saying the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in the country was higher than officially reported.[35]
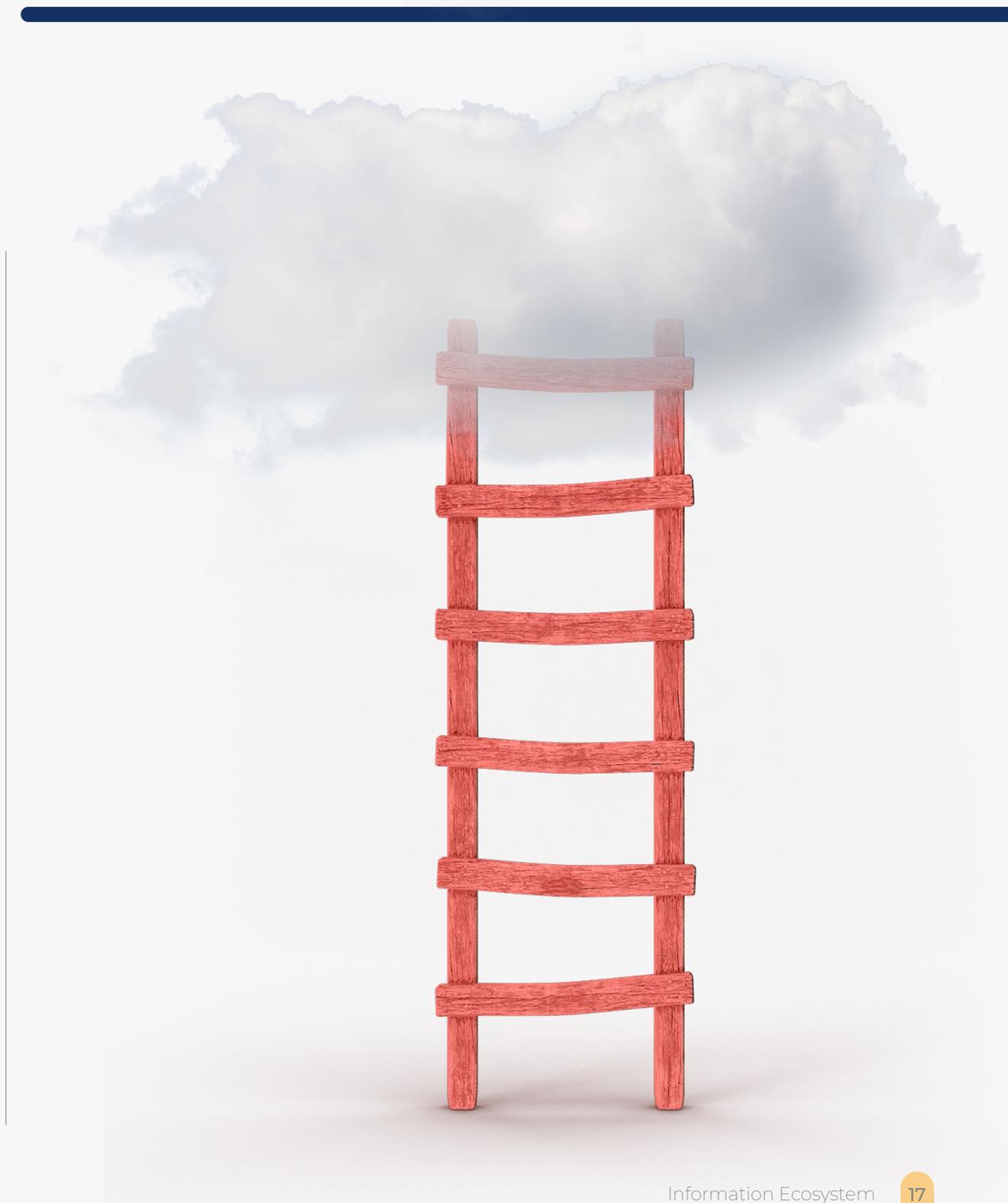
In key informant interviews, a local journalist recalled that it was hard to get information about the COVID-19 situation in the beginning or during the peak of the crisis, due to confusion and the tremendous pressures on the Health Ministry. "Journalists could not even make a call with the ministry to get or check information. The authorities and related parties were not giving much information or statements, generally, there was poor handling of the crisis, but after a period, it became easier to get accurate information from the authorities."[36]

Soon after a brief period of confusion, most of the news websites such as Nas News, Al- Sumaria, Baghdad Today, Rudaw, and other news websites took the initiative and featured their front pages with a section dedicated to COVID-19 news updates and figures.

On 24 February 2020, the (CMC), and 20 Iraqi TV channels joined the Ministry of Health (MoH) in launching an awareness campaign on COVID-19. The campaign included broadcasting videos and publishing articles with detailed explanations of the virus and measures to prevent its spread.[37]

Also, the CMC and MoH, in collaboration with the WHO, launched the official Coronavirus-Iraq website, however, the website has not been updated for over a year.[38]

IDPs were not given enough coverage during the pandemic. A key informant noted that IDPs make a good story only during election times, while they get forgotten by the media during other crises. In a group discussion, participants complained about the lack of visits by journalists to the camps to cover their stories and "make their voices heard."

5. INFORMATION DEMAND

5.1 Information Gaps and Needs

COVID-19 has been devastating for IDP populations in Iraq. Due to difficult living conditions in camps, IDPs are more likely to be affected, on all levels, by the pandemic. There are many different factors that contribute to the risk of contracting COVID-19 and being more vulnerable to complications; a whole family cramped in a tent, limited access to health care, lack of sanitation, and most importantly limited access to trustworthy and reliable information.[39]

5. INFORMATION DEMAND

5.2 Living with Fear in Cramped Conditions

To prevent the outbreak of the virus amongst IDP populations, and as part of the National Response Plan, the Joint Crisis Coordination (JCC) in Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and Barzani Charity Foundation (BCF) decided to lockdown all IDP camps under BCF management and restrict all in and out movements from mid- March to end of August of 2020.[40]

Information inaccuracy impeded people's ability to deal with the pandemic, especially in the beginning. In the early stages of the pandemic, and because of the flood of misinformation about the virus, and rumors about closing the camps, people were mentally tired and confused. Participants in the FGDs reported the lack of accurate information on COVID-19. "We didn't know who and which party is giving us the right information. We were mentally exhausted." said one man in Baharka Camp located on the outskirts of Erbil.

Things worsened during the lockdown of the camps, almost causing panic. IDPs could not leave the camps to go to work. For those residing in camps and working outside the city, the complete lockdown of the camps for almost 6 months, and the shutdown of the economic activities in the city were terrifying; it meant the end of their ordinary livelihood.[41] The international and local humanitarian NGOs helped IDPs, but it was not enough to sustain their livelihoods as they know them. "We didn't have any money left with us to buy and store things," a woman said.
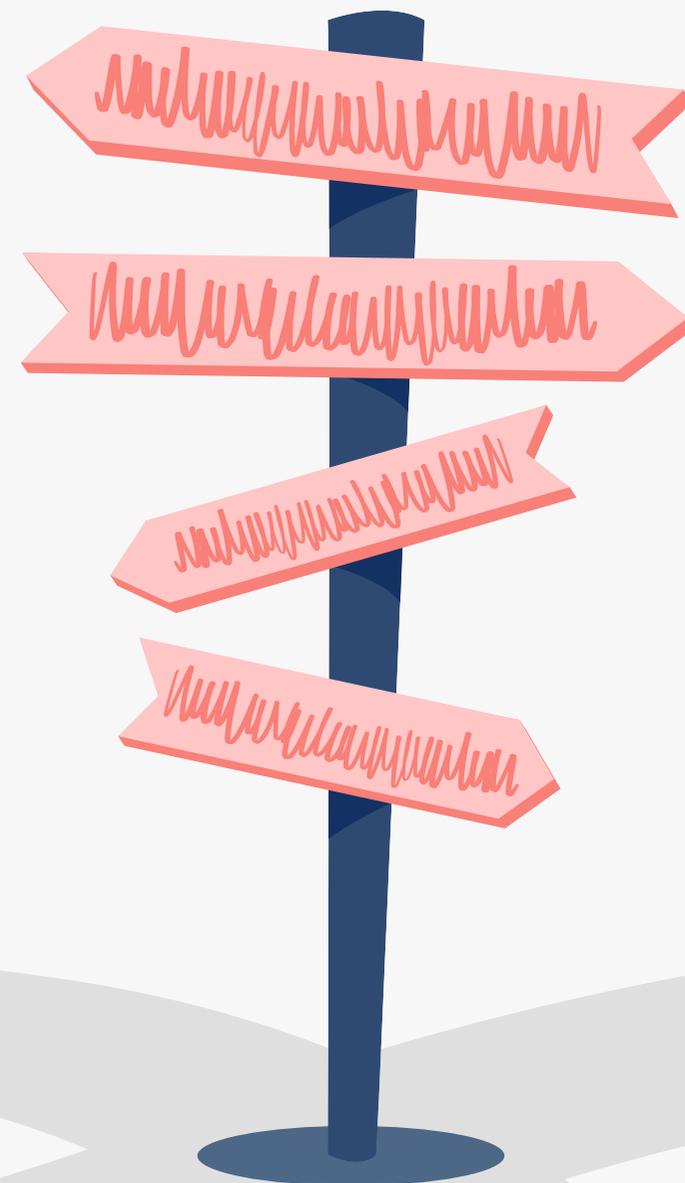
5. INFORMATION DEMAND

5.3 "I don't Know": Information Deprivation

IDPs – like any crisis-affected community – need information as much as they need in-kind emergency assistance. They need to know how to access services, about their situation and what the future holds for them. "We need to know about our fate," a sentence that was echoed during group discussions by more than one IDP in more than one camp.

Some IDPs have been living in tents and caravans for almost eight years since the start of the crisis in 2014, when the Islamic State (ISIS) rapidly seized control of a third of Iraq's land, including Iraq's largest second city, Mosul.[42] Now, years after being trapped in a protracted displacement, their priority information need is to know more about their own status, and how much longer they would be living in tents. Other concerns pertain to compensation processes, security situations, and return procedures.

Compared to 2014 when the camps initially opened, IDPs now have better access to information. At the beginning of the mass displacement, new arrivals at the camps were almost completely cut off from the outside world and they lived in an information vacuum. Presently, IDPs have access to NGOs, media outlets such as TVs, and the internet. However, they are still deprived of essential information about their very own status as displaced.

Key informants, local leaders, and journalists reported that one of the most important topics sought by IDPs is trusted information about their current situation as well as their future.

When asked about their expectations on returning home, over half of the respondents to the survey (n.90 50.8%) said they did not know. The questions that echoed repeatedly in group discussions revolved around their status as displaced, and their lack of knowledge about their fate. A woman in the Bhakra camp summarized the issue: "People here need to know about their fate, we have been here for eight years."
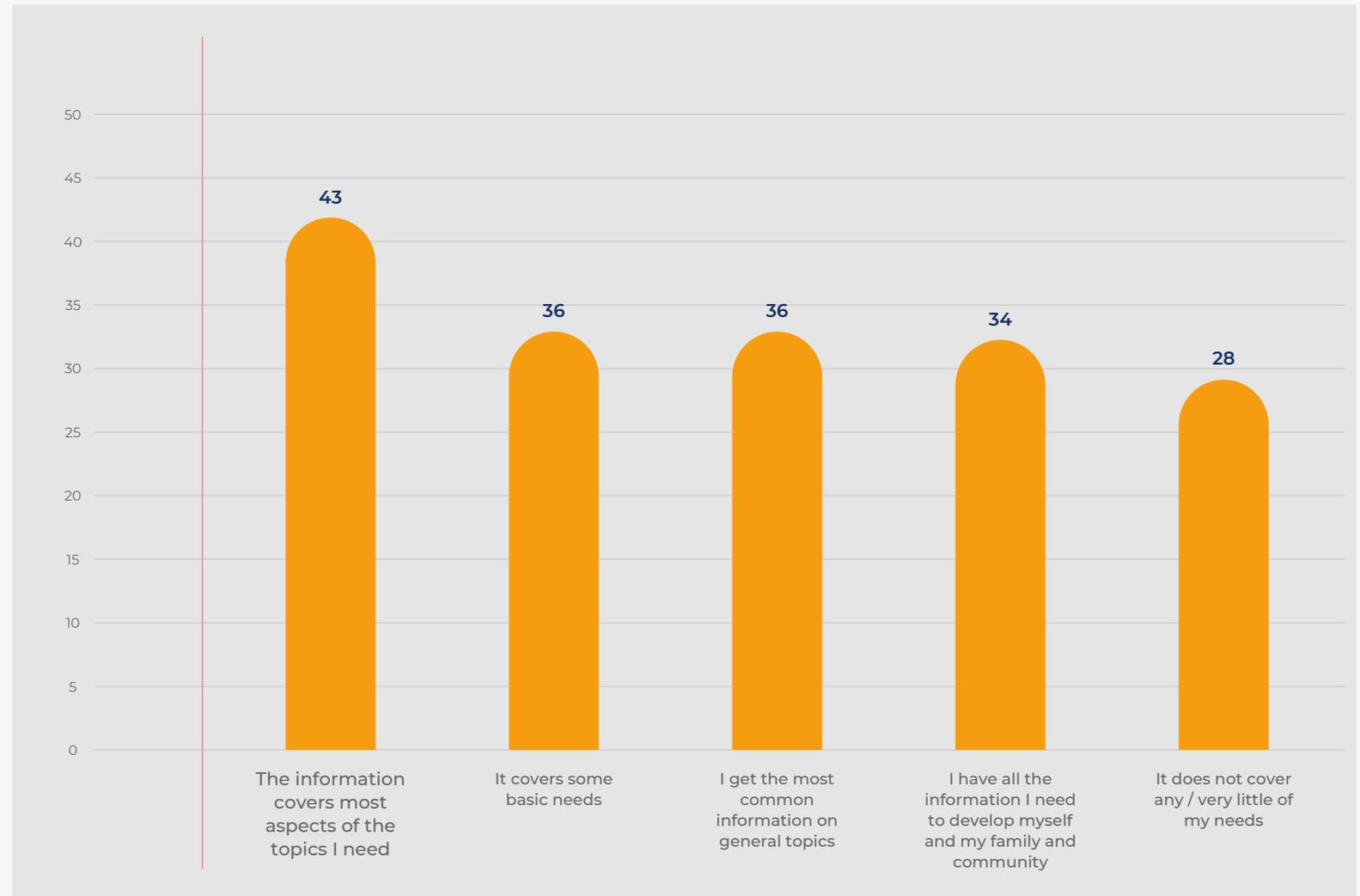
5. INFORMATION DEMAND

Another participant in the Khazer camp stated, "what matters to us the most is to be able to return home," expressing a lack of knowledge of the return process, and reasons preventing some IDPs from returning to their villages which are located near the camps.

When asked if they feel they have enough information to meet their needs, only (n.34, 19.2%) of the respondents stated that they had all the information they needed to develop themselves. The majority of the participants revealed that they lacked the important information that they required. A total of: (n.43, 24.3%) revealed that the information they had covered most aspects of the topics they need while (n.36, 20.3%) stated that they got the most common information on general topics. (n.36, 20.3%) said the information they have covered some basic needs, and (n.28, 15.8%) said the information does not cover any/very little of their needs.

IN GENERAL, DO YOU FEEL YOU HAVE ENOUGH INFORMATION TO MEET NEEDS?

Category	Value
The information covers most aspects of the topics I need	43
It covers some basic needs	36
I get the most common information on general topics	36
I have all the information I need to develop myself and my family and community	34
It does not cover any / very little of my needs	28

5. INFORMATION DEMAND

5.4 Sources of Information; Media Vs. Social Gathering, Family Members

The main language spoken among IDPs is Arabic, and (n. 173; 97.3%) of the survey participants stated that they normally or always received information in their language of preference.

Research material highlights that apart from NGOs, traditional media outlets such as TV channels, and intermittent access to the internet, face-to-face communication is one of the most powerful communication channels among IDPs. People inside the camps, and family members from their remote places of origin, are one of the main sources of information in the IDP camps. In order for individuals to know about what is happening in the world outside the camps (for example, news about their area of origin, and about aid distribution and other events inside the camps, often an IDP functions as a source of information for another IDP.

When asked about their sources of information and news in general, FGD participants were clearly divided between two groups; one group that was composed of younger participants aged 18 to late 20s revealed that they spent time surfing the internet, consuming different kinds of information from social media platforms, mostly from Facebook. The other group, generally the older people, resorts to traditional TV channels, and to cafes, and to other places of gatherings, exchanging bits and pieces of information with one another.

Some families reported that they had neither TV nor the Internet to access information, and their main source of information was face-to-face interactions. Camp administration agencies remain a primary source of information regarding services and aid assistance or solving any issues happening inside the camp. For example, BCF has formed committees inside the camps for better communication. "We have Mukhtar –local leaders- committee, we have women committee, and we have youth committee. These committees allow us and the IDPs to have a better information exchange, better reach," said the Bahrka camp manager.

However, the information gap about their own situation has impacted IDPs' trust in government sources, and it has been reflected in their overall relationship with information in general; how or where they access it, how they behave around it, and whether they trust it or not. This lack of trust has often led IDPs to rely on friends, relatives, and family members for information and they consider them a trusted source.
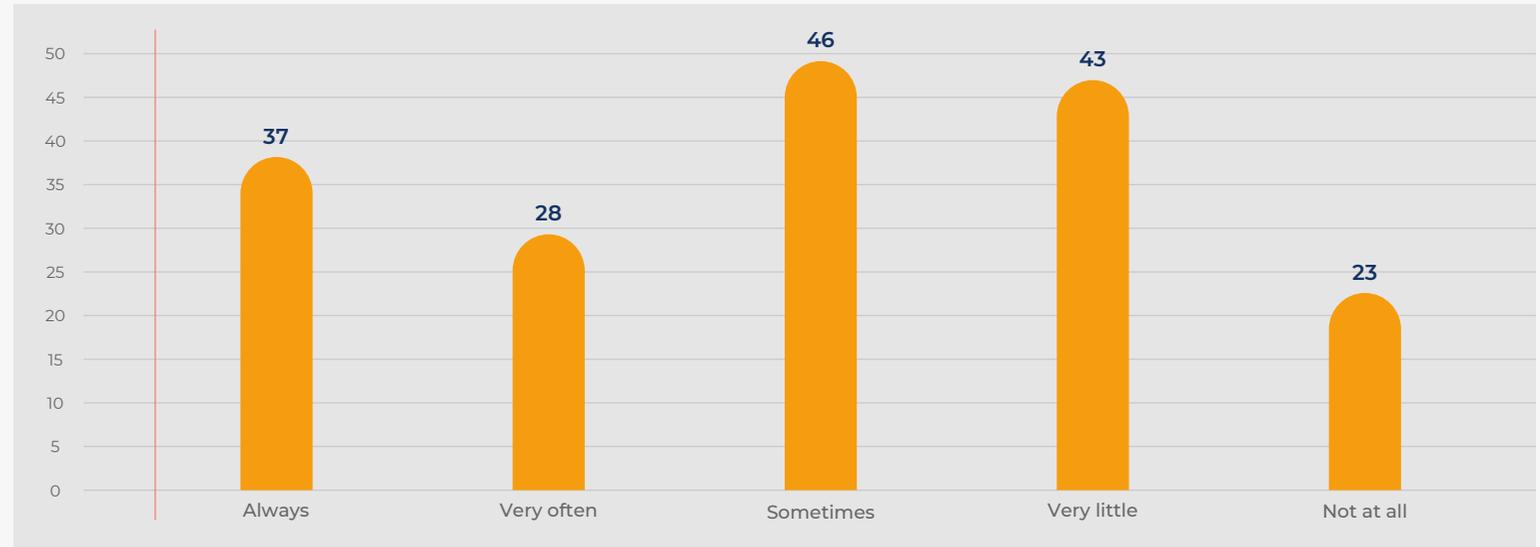For example, when asked how they access information related to COVID-19, the respondents were given multiple choice of sources with a five-point scale ranging from (1-Not at all,) (2-Very Little,) (3- Sometimes,) (4- Very often) to (5-Always).

The majority (n.154, 87%) of the survey respondents reported that they received their information through face-to-face interactions primarily from friends and family members. Only (n.23, 13%) stated that they did not access information through friends and family members at all.
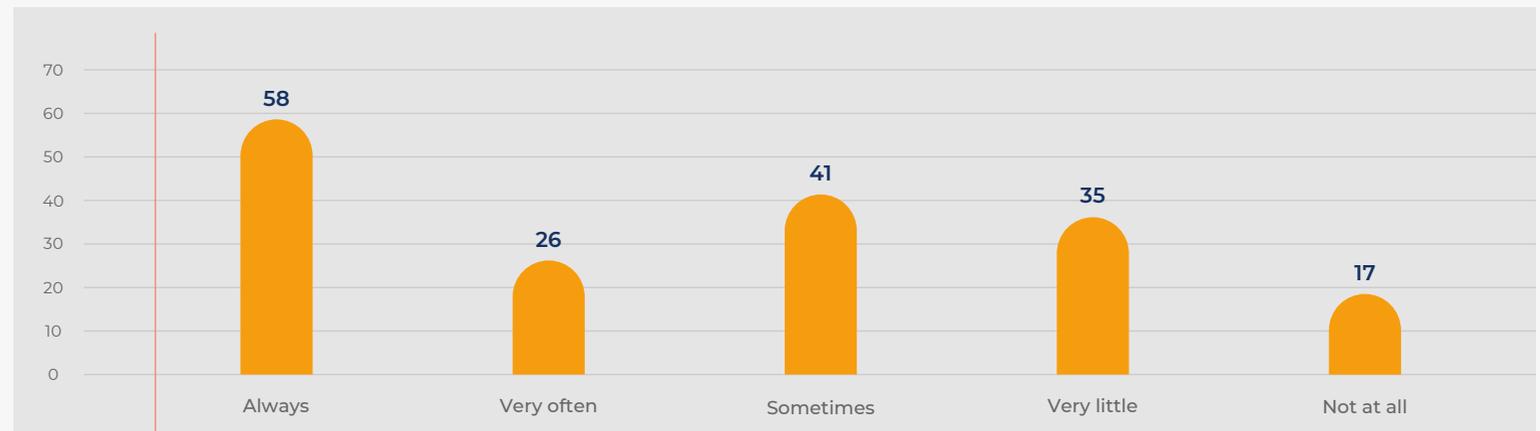
5. INFORMATION DEMAND

RESPONDENTS GETTING THEIR INFORMATION FROM FRIENDS OR FAMILY MEMBERS.

Regarding a trusted source of information among IDPs, specifically on COVID-19, overall (n 160, 90.4%) of the respondents considered family and friends as a source they trust more than other sources with (5-Always, n.58, 32.7%) or (4- Very often, n.26, 14.6%) or, (3-sometimes, n.41 23.2%) or (2- very little n.35, 19.8%) and only (n.17, 9.6%) selected (1-Not at all) saying they don't trust family and Friends.

Chart values:
- Always: 37
- Very often: 28
- Sometimes: 46
- Very little: 43
- Not at all: 23

TRUSTING FAMILY AND FRIENDS AS A SOURCE OF INFORMATION

At the same time, the majority (n. 166, 93.8%) expressed trust in NGOs regarding COVID information, while only (n 11, 6.2%) of them said they don't trust NGOs.

Chart values:
- Always: 58
- Very often: 26
- Sometimes: 41
- Very little: 35
- Not at all: 17

5. INFORMATION DEMAND

5.5 Information Access Challenges and Difficulties

Access to trustworthy information is critical for the survival of IDPs and their mental health stability, and most importantly, for them to be able to cope with their situation and make well-informed decisions. However, getting information, especially highly relevant information, has proven to be difficult.

Firstly, access to information and communication between camp populations and the world outside has improved significantly. In 2014, when the mass displacement started, IDPs were completely cut off from the outside world and they lived in an information vacuum which hindered their ability to cope with the calamity that had just fallen upon them.[43]

However, eight years later, IDPs are still confronted with challenges and difficulties that hinder the timely flow of information. In the first instance, IDPs are faced with economic challenges that constrain their ability to buy the internet. During FGD sessions, some of the participants reported that they neither had internet nor Televisions to access any kind of information and they rely solely on word of mouth.

For example, while most households in Bahrka camp in Erbil own TVs, and some families contribute towards internet services, families in Khazer camp in Nineveh plains, reported that they are deprived of access to sources of information such as TV and internet due to their financial situation. These groups of people are left only with one option to receive their needs information from; the other IDPs around them, or other people such as relatives and family members.

Eight FGD participants suggested that having internet "is a must" and has become a necessity, especially during the lockdown and online schooling. They said they have "sacrificed" other needs, and "compromised" other life requirements, sometimes selling household items, to pay for internet services.

Another challenge to accessing information is the lack of electricity in the camps. Participants in Kahzer camp reported that even people who own TVs do not always have access to the news and information, as electricity is only available for five hours per day; two hours during the day and three hours during the night.

Information deprivation and access challenges are more acute with vulnerable groups such as women, the elderly, and the illiterate. Some women reported that they spent most of their time inside their shelters taking care of children, cooking, and doing other household chores, and their only source of information was their male counterparts such as their husbands, brothers, or fathers.

To support this, in response to the question regarding which sources of information IDPs trusted more to get information about COVID-19, the majority of female IDPs stated that family and religious leaders are the main sources of information. To support this, in response to the question that which sources of information IDPs trust more to get information about COVID-19, the majority of female IDPs stated that friends and family are the main sources of information, in which out of 95 female participants 33 of them responded with "always" and 19 others responded with "sometimes" do they trust friends and family as a source of information.

5. INFORMATION DEMAND
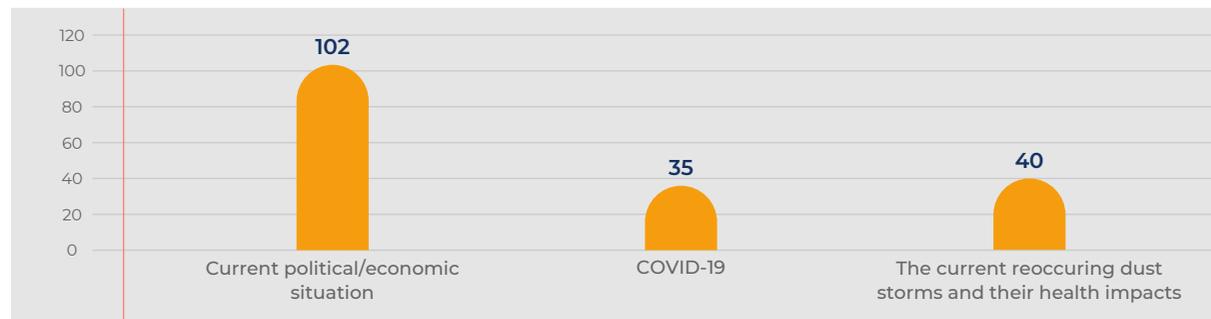
5.6 Priority Needs and Information Needs

Research materials highlight that more than two years after the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of IDPs are no longer interested, or seek information about COVID-19. Their focus has shifted back to the political and economic situation in the country, and how the next government would affect or change their status. The information the IDPs seek and need the most is the information about the current political situation in Iraq. However, their most pressing needs remain access to food and clean water.

Samir Yahya, a journalist, and the Vice President of Al-Salam Radio* who was one of the KI stated that one of the most important topics that IDPs sought trusted information about concerned their future, and the return process. "However, they do not have enough knowledge and information because these topics are political and very complex."[44]
During a group session in Harsham camp, a young IDP said that "news about the current political situation and security are the most pressing topics that IDPs needed information on. COVID-19 has been forgotten."
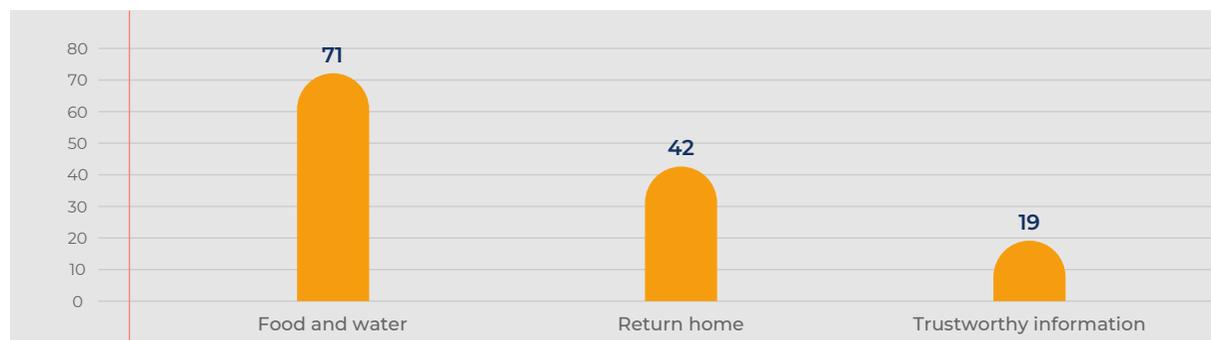
When asked "in general which of the following information do you need the most?" over half of the survey respondents (n.102, 57.6%) selected (the current political/economic situation,) while only (n.35, 19.8%) selected (COVID-19,) and (n.40, 22.6%) selected "The current reoccurring dust storms and their health impacts."

IN GENERAL WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION YOU NEED THE MOST?

Regarding their most pressing needs in their current living conditions, (n.,71 40.1%) of the respondents selected (food and water,) while (n.23.7 ,42%) selected return home as the priority need, and only (n.10.7 ,19%) selected trustworthy information as their urgent need now.

NEEDS IN THEIR CURRENT LIVING CONDITIONS

5. INFORMATION DEMAND

5.7 Lack of Trust; Doubting the Information, and the Providers

When it comes to information trust, IDPs expressed a strong lack of trust in government officials, and to a lesser extent in NGOs, caused by their protracted displacement and previous interactions with the government and NGOs. "We no longer trust anyone, they [government officials] come here, they make promises and then break them," one of the FGD participants in the Bahrka camp said. Others complained about the lack of presence of international NGOs, mentioning that they have not seen any of them in the camp for more than a year.

Other factors that have contributed to creating the lack of trust is that the topic of IDPs has been politicized and used by politicians, especially during election campaigns without any tangible results. During key informant interviews, journalists and local leaders reported IDP in Iraq is one of the most contentious issues in ongoing political debate, which led to the prolonging of their displacement.

Regarding information on COVID-19 and the pandemic in general, the international and local NGOs used different tools and methods such as Face to Face, group sessions, social media, and mass messaging to reach IDPs inside the camps to communicate the key messages about understanding the seriousness of the disease and measures to prevent the spread of the virus.

IDPs who participated in FGDs mentioned that they considered NGOs one of the main sources for COVID-19 information, believing NGOs' health advice and guidelines, and have participated in COVID-19 activities such as awareness sessions. However, the majority of FGD participants expressed beliefs that COVID-19 is not a real disease or other conspiracy theories including that the pandemic is an "international conspiracy" or "just another conflict between China and the USA," or "it was exaggerated for profit, so they [the west] could sell us the vaccine," or "America made the virus" and other conspiracy theory related beliefs.
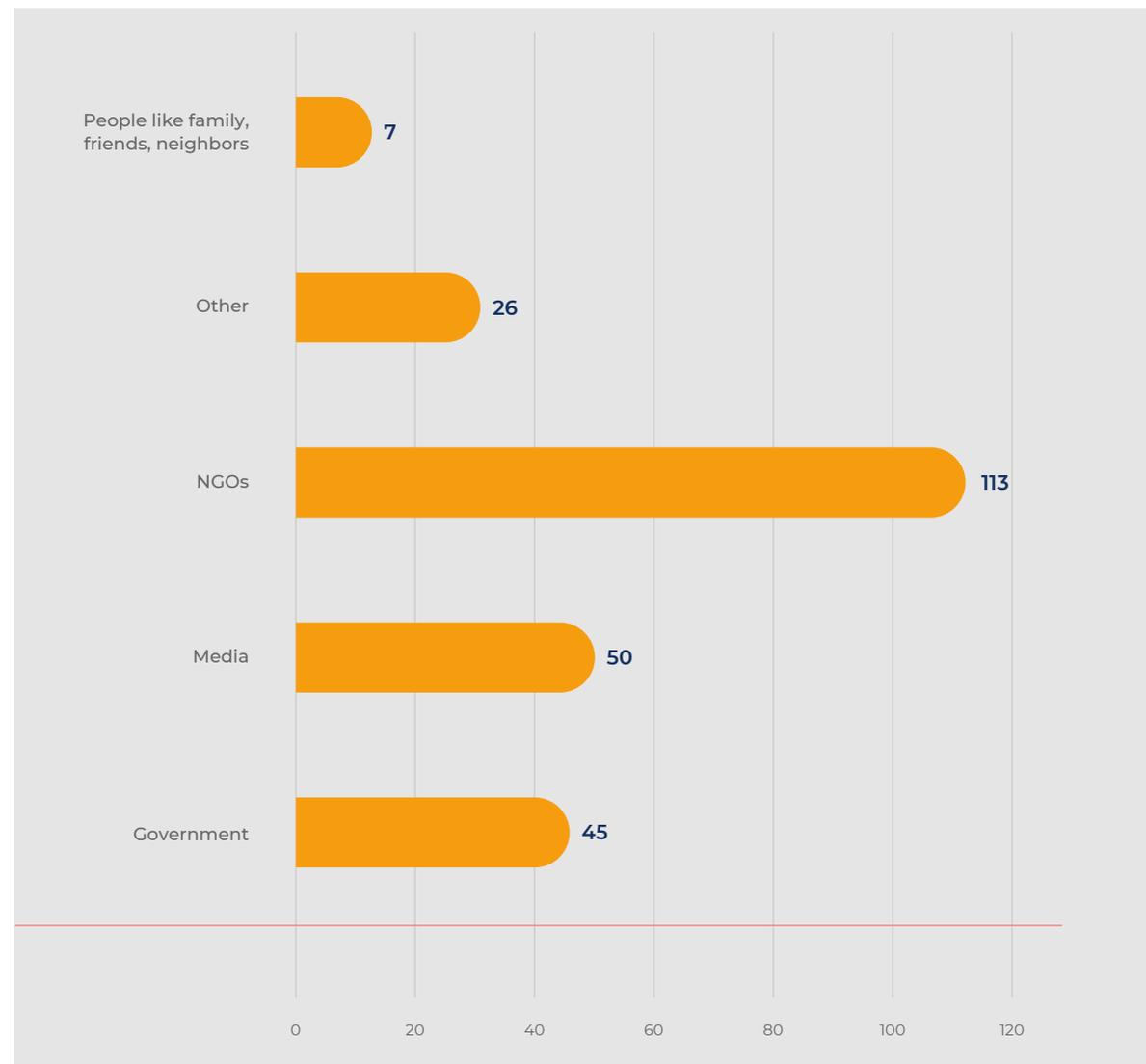
5. INFORMATION DEMAND

When asked about a trusted source of information in general, only (n.45, 25.4%) of the survey respondents selected the government as a trusted source amongst other sources. Only a small portion (9.6%) of the respondents selected Government as the only trusted source of information.
Another (n.50, 28.2%) chose media, and (n.113. 63.8%) selected NGOs. However, (n.26, 14.7%) of the respondents selected "Other" with (n7. 27 out of the 26 people) stated they believe and trust other people like family, friends, and neighbors, while another (n.10, 38.5 out of the 26 people) stated they don't trust anyone.

While (n.113, 63.8%) of the respondents said they trust NGOs as a source of information next to the other sources, only (n. 4, 2.26%) of respondents selected NGOs as the only trusted source.

An IDP woman explained the relationship with NGOs by stating that "we do trust NGOs, but we believe that corona is just influenza." Another IDP in Bahrka camp mentioned that he had contracted COVID-19 "but still, I'm not convinced, because it's [COVID-19] a political game by some great powers. Corona is there, it's an old virus like all other viruses, but suddenly it was exaggerated and spread for political reasons."

Though the five to six-month period of closing the camps during the general lockdown plan helped to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus amongst IDP populations, on the other hand, it contributed to the spread of misinformation, leading to creating an environment where myths and conspiracy theories can easily run rampant, and become serious topics for discussion amongst people.
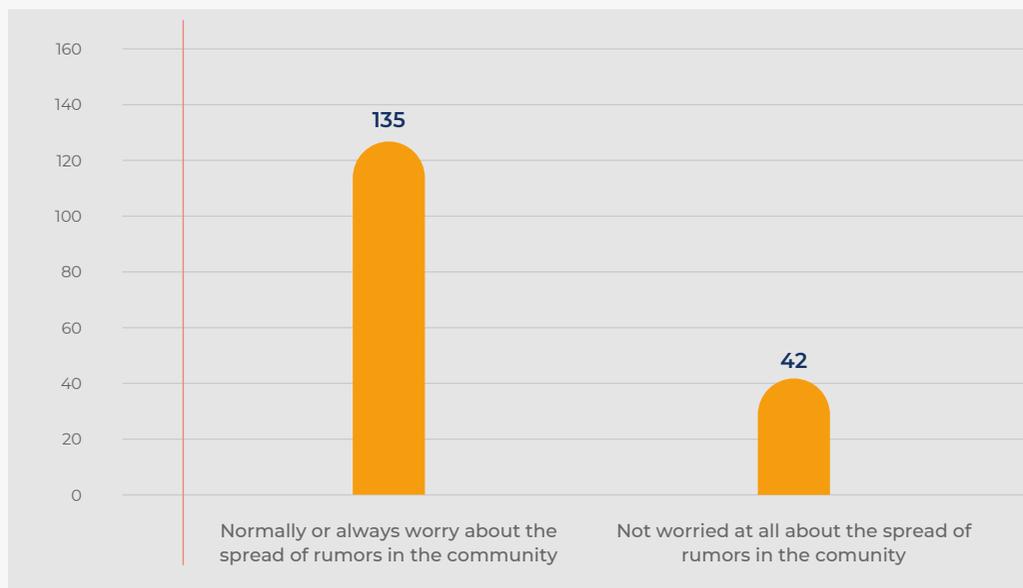
TRUSTED SOURCE OF INFORMATION IN GENERAL

Source	Value
People like family, friends, neighbors	7
Other	26
NGOs	113
Media	50
Government	45

5. INFORMATION DEMAND

5.8 Rumors, Fear Vs. Reality

Although almost all the survey respondents (n. 174, 98%) expressed confidence that they normally or always can differentiate between "information that is right and information that is wrong or false, the majority (n.135, 76.3%) stated that they normally or always worry about the spread of rumors in the community, while the remaining (n. 42, 23.7%) said they are not worried at all.

SPREAD OF RUMORS IN THE COMMUNITY

135	42
Normally or always worry about the spread of rumors in the community	Not worried at all about the spread of rumors in the comunity

Between late April and late May of 2021, IOM's community-based surveillance recorded 858 rumors amongst IDPs residing in camps in Erbil, Nineveh, and Anbar.[45]

"I heard that people have seen someone whose eyes had popped out once he received the [COVID-19] vaccine." A Key informant local leader recounted, saying that this was one of the many rumors that were circulating in one of the IDP camps in Erbil during the vaccination campaign. He blamed "the internet," and the social media platforms, confirming the difficulty to fight rumors in an environment that lacks trust and trustworthy information.

Despite efforts by WHO and other NGOs to combat rumors, and fight disinformation amongst IDPs about COVID-19 in general, and about the vaccines particularly, many IDPs expressed a lack of desire to receive the vaccination. Some mentioned fear of the side effects, preferring not to receive it unless they are obliged.

According to the key informant interviews and FGDs, one of the most persistent rumors is that vaccines developed for COVID-19 cause sterility or, whoever receives them die after two or three years.

For example, amongst 13 participants in Khazer FGD, three women a total of four, and three men a total of nine, had refused to receive vaccines. One of the unvaccinated women said, "I heard that whoever gets vaccinated will not be able to have babies, and pregnant women will have miscarriages and, I know it happened." Another man expressed his refusal to get the vaccine, mentioning that God is the healer, not the vaccine.

5. INFORMATION DEMAND

According to the survey results, a third of the respondents (n. 59, 33.3%) said they don't trust vaccines developed for COVID-19, while (n. 52, 29.4%) of them said they have not received the vaccines with their reasons stated being the lack of trust and feeling fear of the side effects. Over half of the respondents (n. 95, 53.7%) believed that SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, was developed in a lab in China, and (n.42, 23.7%) believed that the virus mostly affects white people in Europe and the USA.
On local treatments of COVID-19, (n.122, 69%) believed that local treatments such as ginger, garlic, and other herbs could cure Coronavirus.

It was not only COVID-19-related rumors that were circulating during the lockdown, triging fears amongst IDPs, there were also rumors about ending the camps by closing them down. According to a key informant interview, there are always rumors about closing down the camp, "and sending people to another location. This is what most terrifies people in the camp."[46]

It is worth mentioning that it was during these times that the Iraqi authorities started closing down the major camps in Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala, and other governorates rendering homeless more than 100,000 people in the middle of the pandemic.[47]

Another factor that contributes to the spreading of rumors, especially rumors related to their situation in general, is the lack of interest by the government in finding a serious solution for the IDP issue.
Another key informant believed that not involving IDPs in an active dialogue about their situation and their return process "makes them scared and pushes them to seek information from whatever sources. Rumors are the main obstacle to reach accurate information."[48]

5.9 Leading NGOs helping IDPs during the pandemic

Many different international and national NGOs such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the Iraqi Red Crescent and many others, have responded to the pandemic by supporting health centers inside the camps, launching awareness campaigns about COVID-19 and preventing measures amongst the IDP populations, and providing them with essential supplies such as hygiene kits.

For example, IOM's Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) team used "many different communication methods to reach people in different settings including the IDP camps, like a tent-to-tent visit, face to face, awareness sessions, and mass media as well."[49] IOM has installed TV screens in health facilities waiting for areas that regularly showed COVID-19 awareness and prevention videos to target patients with key messages.

In addition to all this, and to enhance the impact of their messaging, IOM, and other NGOs including local ones such as BCF, turned to social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and other platforms to reach a wider population, especially among youth.

WHO, in collaboration with the MoH and other partners, adopted its global COVID-19 Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan (SPRP) 2020 to the Iraqi context, developing a country-level SPRP. During the pandemic, WHO provided strategic and policy-level advice to the MoH in Baghdad and KRG, and technical guidance to the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG). The support ranged from distributing medicines and equipment to creating awareness among the public, including priority groups such as IDPs, refugees, and returnees. The awareness campaign used the main Iraqi TV and Radio channels, mass SMS messages, and the dissemination of Information Education and Communication (IEC) material through local and international partner agencies. The messages, which were contextualized from global WHO standard materials, were disseminated in the local Kurdish and Arabic languages.[50]
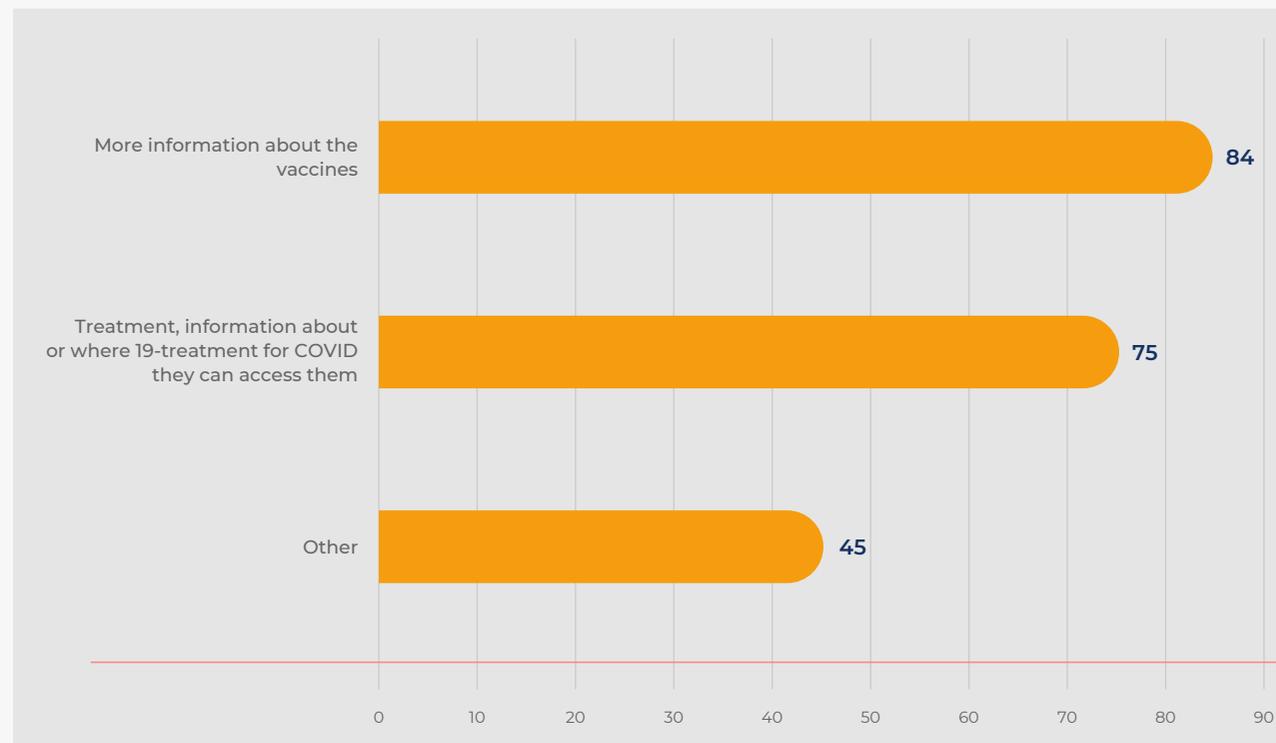
5. INFORMATION DEMAND

5.10 COVID-19 Information

Almost all IDPs spoken with during FGDs expressed a lack of interest to learn more about COVID-19, considering it to be no longer a topic of concern. However, they stated that they were fully aware of COVID-19 related information, especially preventing measures such as practicing social distancing and washing hands. Health protocols, guidance, and advice were provided by all NGOs, Government officials, and health workers. FGD participants stated that during the peak of the pandemic they received their COVID-information mostly from NGOs and from the camp management, and those with internet access indicated that they get their information through social media, especially Facebook. However, many participants stated that they trusted their family members when they had COVID related questions. Participants emphasized that during the lockdown, it was economic survival, not COVID, that they were most worried about.
In response to the question, "What information do you need more regarding the COVID-19 pandemic", the largest percentage of survey respondents (n.84, 47.4%) selected they need more information about the vaccines, followed by (n. 75, 42.3%) who selected treatment, information about treatments for COVID-19 or where they can access them. A quarter (n. 45, 25%) of the respondents selected "other" with most of them showing a lack of interest in any COVID-19-related information, stating that they "don't care" or they "don't believe" in it.

WHAT INFORMATION DO YOU NEED MORE REGARDING COVID-19 PANDEMIC?

Category	Value
More information about the vaccines	84
Treatment, information about or where 19-treatment for COVID they can access them	75
Other	45

(What information do you need more regarding the COVID-19 pandemic?)
(n.56, %31.6) Understanding; How to recognize the signs and symptoms of the virus)
(n.84, %47.4) More information about the vaccine.
(n.39, %22.3) Prevention (what can you do to protect yourself and your family?)
(n. 75, %42.3) Treatment (information about treatments for COVID-19 or where you can access them.)
(n. 5, %2.8) Education (how students can access education during the pandemic)
(n. 4, %2.2) Employment (government support and state aid to employment)
(n. 7, %3.9) Aid (access to humanitarian aid in relation to COVID-19 lockdown)
(n.24, %13.5) Local COVID-19 news.
(n. 45, %25) of participants selected "Other.

CONCLUSION

More than two years after the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, IDPs generally showed a lack of interest in discussing or learning more about the pandemic or any COVID related information. Their interest has shifted back to their own situation and the country's political situation.

IDPs residing inside camps no longer live in a complete information vacuum as they once did in the early stages of mass displacement in 2014. After eight years, people in camps have more access to information through NGOs, media, and the internet. Their communication with the outside world and its happenings has improved during the last few years. However, IDPs are still deprived of, and excluded from, essential information about their suspended status as displaced, and information that could empower them and enable them to make the right decision about their future.

Information deprivation, a sense of abandonment and exclusion, and a lack of trust in government institutions have gradually led to the building of an environment inside IDP camps that encourages rumors and misinformation. For example, despite awareness campaigns, and efforts by NGOs and the MoH on COVID-19 stressing the benefits of vaccinations, there are still IDPs who refuse to receive vaccines "unless they become obligatory," as an IDP firmly said. Rumors about COVID-19 being a conspiracy, and that vaccines kill people or cause infertility, are still circulating among them.

The general lack of interest by the federal government in effectively addressing the long and protracted displacement of tens of thousands of people living in limbo with zero knowledge about their tomorrows- some displaced more than once, and others have been living in tents since 2014- and more importantly, the lack of engagement of IDPs in an informative dialogue regarding a safe and dignified return process to their area of origin, has driven IDPs to seek information from unvetted sources such as Facebook posts and other social media platforms, or from relatives, friends and each other, often seeing rumors and misinformation as credible facts.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Access to accurate and trustworthy information is the main key to a healthy decision-making process, especially for IDPs who have been living in limbo for years with uncertainty about their tomorrows.

The information deprivation is making IDPs more vulnerable and susceptible to rumors and misinformation. Some of the IDPs have been displaced more than once with no means or ability to return home.

Based on the key findings the report makes the following recommendations to the government, media, and International and local NGOs in order to improve the information ecosystem amongst the IDP population.

■ To restore IDP's trust, the government should address IDP's most urgent and most relevant information needs, information about their status as displaced. The Government must increase its presence inside the camps and engage the displaced population in an active and informative dialogue about what they need to know regarding their essential questions associated with a safe and voluntarily return, the security situation in their area of origin, and the compensation process for their destroyed homes. Knowing answers to these questions is not only a fundamental right of all IDPs, but also it is integral to achieving a full understanding of their current conditions.

■ The government must increase the key services, such as electric power, inside the camps. The supply of sufficient electricity is essential for all IDP households, not only for dealing with the extreme weather conditions in the summer and winter seasons but also for accessing information.

■ Iraqi National Media should devote more attention and work to IDPs by increasing their coverage and reporting on their main issues and human stories. In addition to that, the media, especially the TV channels should launch awareness campaigns to combat COVID-19 rumors and misinformation inside the camps.

■ UN agencies, and international and local NGOs, should view the need for information as an essential aid that must be delivered just like food, water, medical and other needs.

■ Community leaders, especially religious leaders, should, seriously, address the spread of the rumors inside the camps, and speak out more about the benefits of receiving vaccinations.

■ As IDPs gradually ignore COVID-19's seriousness, neglecting preventive measures, and showing a lack of interest, the government and NGOs must return to, and re-increase their presence, in the camps, with reactivation of awareness campaigns, reminding the camp population that COVID-19 is still here, and it is not something from the past.

■ NGOs should improve the communication strategies with IDP populations, especially the feedback strategy; increase and encourage participation, and seek more creative ways on engaging IDPs in their feedback. Dumping information in the camps and leaving, without establishing an effective dialogue and receiving feedback from IDPs, will contribute to more confusion, not to a better and clearer understanding.

KII LIST, THEIR NAMES, POSITIONS, AND THEIR INSTITUTIONS.

	Institutions	Name (Position)
International Organizations	IOM	Nellie Ghusayni, Head of the Migration Health Division in IOM Iraq
	WHO	Kamal Olleri, Health Cluster Coordinator, WHO Iraq,
Government Authorities	Erbil Governorate	Srwa Rasoul Hama Migration and crisis response Directorate, Erbil Governorate, KRI.
Media Organizations	Al-Sharqiyah TV Channel	Anas Al- Badri, Journalist
	Al-Salam Radio	Yahya, Samir, journalist and Vice President of Al-Salam Radio
CSO	Barzani Charity Foundation	Alva Ayed Ali Bahrka Camp Manager
	PAO Organization	Ibrahim Samaan Al Eid
Community	Religious Leader, Community Member	Jumaa Muhsin Mahmood
	Religious Leader, Community Member	Mahmood Elyas Mohammed

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