

# Africa Infodemic Response Alliance

A WHO-HOSTED NETWORK



**AIRA Infodemic Trends Report**

**3-20 December 2024**

**Weekly brief #144**

# Top concerns

## [Cholera outbreak in South Sudan and Ghana highlights distrust in public health authorities](#)

Online discussions of cholera outbreaks reveal public distrust in health and government authorities.

## [Fear over cross border transmission of mpox in Angola, distrust in public health measures in Uganda, disinformation about mpox vaccine by known anti-vaxx in Kenya](#)

Claims about coercing mpox vaccines in Kenya fuels skepticism among online users amplifying distrust in government initiatives. Distrust in local authorities in online discussions in Angola and Uganda.

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## **Public Health Infodemic Trends in the African Region**

This weekly report provides key highlights and operational recommendations based on social listening data from 3-20 December 2024 in Africa.

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## South Sudan, Ghana

### Cholera outbreak in South Sudan and Ghana highlights distrust in public health authorities

Engagement/ South Sudan: **8 posts, 1157 likes, 159 comments**

- The announcement of the cholera outbreak by Eye Radio, a South Sudanese radio station, has sparked widespread concern about public safety, criticism of the authorities' response—particularly as many South Sudanese are also facing hunger—and urgent calls for decisive action to prevent the further spread of the disease. Social media discussions have raised concerns about the delayed administration of the oral cholera vaccine.
- There are broader concerns about resource constraints, which many attribute to challenges in governance and underinvestment in the healthcare sector, citing for example the closure of essential health facilities due to shortages of medicine and insufficient support for healthcare workers.
- Below are some examples from online users. [[LINK](#), [LINK](#), [LINK](#)]

That's too much, there must be strictly measured to prevent cholera and oral cholera vaccine should be given to the public who are not affected

Once the leadership failed the citizens must suffer in so many way .  
May God have mercy on us.

There's too much report receive by minister due to serious e pandemic in the country we need to take good effort of prevention

South Sudan has poor sanitation that is the fact

I know they'll even delay vaccines while don't know how fast is cholera and is deathly

- According to Radio Tamazuj's news update in Juba Arabic on 17 December, cholera has affected refugees in northern South Sudan, particularly in Ram, particularly refugees who fled from Sudan are being impacted [[LINK](#)].

#### Why is it concerning?

- Epidemiological context:** The Multi-country outbreak of cholera external situation report n. 21, published on 18 December 2024 by the World Health Organization, notes that in South Sudan, a new cholera outbreak was confirmed

and declared in October 2024 in the border town of Renk, Upper Nile state, affecting refugees, returnees, and local communities. [\[LINK\]](#)

- Erosion of trust in healthcare authorities:** Social media discussions questioning South Sudan's preparedness to address the cholera outbreak and calling for more effective public health measures signal a lack of public confidence in the government's response. When public trust wanes, it weakens the effectiveness of health interventions and may lead to resistance in following health guidelines, potentially exacerbating the spread of cholera and other diseases.
- Health risks and access inequalities:** The cholera outbreak in South Sudan has raised significant concerns on social media, with a particular focus on the heightened risks faced by refugees and returnees. These vulnerable populations often live in overcrowded camps with poor sanitation and limited access to clean water, making them especially susceptible to the disease. Many users are urging the government to prioritize containment efforts and improve basic health services, stressing the urgency of addressing these inequalities.

### What can we do?

- Monitor and address narratives that undermine public trust:** Provide regular, transparent updates on the cholera outbreak and public health efforts in South Sudan, including epidemiological reports, vaccination progress, and partnerships with local and international organizations. Consistent communication helps build public trust, combat misinformation, and keep communities informed on actions to safeguard their health.
- Increase vaccine accessibility and transparency:** Address concerns about vaccine availability by providing clear, transparent information on distribution plans. Ensure that vaccine distribution is equitable, with a focus on the most vulnerable populations affected by the outbreak. According to the key weekly highlights as of 22 November 2024, the age group with the highest case count is 15-44 years (40%), followed by children aged 5-14 years (26%). Males account for 54% of all reported cases. Prioritizing these groups in vaccine distribution will help ensure the most at-risk populations are protected. [\[LINK\]](#)
- Engage actively with refugee communities through RCCE efforts:** Foster direct engagement with refugee communities to promote safe water practices, cholera

transmission awareness, and prevention methods. Collect feedback through community discussions and sessions with camp leaders to identify any confusion or misinformation, ensuring these concerns are addressed promptly.

**Engagement/ Ghana: 12 posts, 1148 likes, 225 comments**

- Recent social media posts on X and Facebook have highlighted the strain on health facilities in the western region of Ghana due to the cholera outbreak including converting waiting areas into wards for cholera patients. Additionally, there are concerns from medical doctors about families refusing to leave after bringing relatives for treatment, as they fear they are being detained by authorities rather than receiving medical care. [[LINK](#), [LINK](#)]
- In addition, a ban has been imposed on food vendors selling vegetables as health authorities attribute the outbreak to contaminated vegetables and poor sanitary conditions in an attempt to stabilize the situation. [[LINK](#)]
- A statement by the Ghana medical association garnered 86 comments from online users on X. The majority of online users reflect significant frustration at the Ghana Medical Association for not supporting the call to demand action against Galamsey (which refers to illegal small-scale gold mining in Ghana). In this context, the public perception has shifted from the escalation of the cholera outbreak to the advocacy efforts about stopping illegal mining, a topic that has increasingly become a focal point for public discourse, as the environmental and health risks associated with galamsey continue to affect communities [[LINK](#)].

Isn't it possible that galamsey's to blame for this cholera outbreak?

Today, you are calling on the government for Potable Drinking Water? When the youth of this nation saw the impending danger and embarked on [#STOPGALLEMSAYNOW](#) demonstration, you turned deaf ears and blinds to that. Today, you are calling on who?

Dear GMA,  
The affected areas have only galamsey water.  
Thank you

## Why is it concerning?

- Interconnectedness between public health and environmental health:**  
Environmental health risks, such as water contamination from illegal mining, highlights the interconnectedness of environmental and public health. Poor environmental conditions directly contribute to the spread of diseases like cholera.
- Erosion of trust in medical professionals and increased risk of disease spread:**  
When families fear that their relatives may be detained rather than treated, it signals a lack of trust in medical authorities, which undermines the credibility and authority of healthcare professionals. This mistrust makes it harder for medical teams to effectively provide care and ensure cooperation from the community.

## What can we do?

- Promoting transparency about medical decisions,** especially in sensitive situations like preventing relatives from staying in cholera wards, is crucial to maintaining trust and cooperation. For example, clear communication of health protocols, community based communication can reduce fear, and ensure the family members understand the necessity of the measures.
- Promote community engagement activities with food vendors:** Engage vendors through community meetings or local leaders to ensure they have a platform to voice concerns, receive updates, and understand health authorities' measures. Open lines of communication will help mitigate misunderstandings and reduce economic uncertainty.

## Angola, Kenya, Uganda

**Fear over cross border transmission of mpox in Angola, distrust in public health measures in Uganda, disinformation about mpox vaccine by known anti-vaxx in Kenya**

### Engagement/ Angola: 4 posts, 1196 likes, 143 comments

- Recent social media discussions about the detection of mpox cases in Angola highlight concerns over cross-border transmission between Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), with references to Uíge, a province located in the northwestern part of the country, bordering DRC. Online users call for stronger cross-border disease surveillance while also expressing fears of lockdown measures. [\[LINK\]](#)

### Engagement/ Uganda: 8 posts, 447 likes, 106 comments

- A Facebook post by 91.2 Crooze FM highlights growing concerns among health workers at Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital (Western Uganda) over the rising Mpox cases, particularly with the anticipated surge during the festive season. The strain on resources could lead to critical gaps in patient management, heightening the risk of a larger outbreak. [\[LINK\]](#)
- Conversations from online users on a Facebook post by NBS Television also reveal widespread distrust in the official epidemiological reports, with many questioning the accuracy of the reported case numbers of mpox in the country. [\[LINK\]](#). On X, the same post garnered the attention of an online users who blamed the local media of stigmatising sex workers though the article's title: "*sex workers, serving pleasure and disease*"
- Two online users expressed their rejection of mpox vaccines on an X post by Ugandan media outlet Daily Monitor: "*The vaccination targets truck drivers, commercial sex workers, and high-risk areas in Uganda to curb the spread of Mpox, given their elevated risk of exposure and transmission*". The article is behind a paywall therefore no further information about vaccination dates are available. [\[LINK\]](#)

### Engagement/ Kenya: 10 posts, 796 likes, 117 comments

- Dr. Wahome Ngare is a Kenyan doctor and anti-vaxxer who has been involved in disinformation campaigns against the World Health Organization (WHO) and vaccines. He shared a post on Facebook on 20 December fuelling distrust in local Kenyan authorities and questioning the safety of Mpox and livestock vaccines. [\[LINK\]](#)
- Dr Wahome Ngare has previously spread disinformation about the pandemic agreement, malaria, tetanus and HPV vaccines. [\[LINK\]](#)

- According to WHO, Implementing targeted vaccination approaches can help reduce the spread of the virus by focusing on those at the highest risk of infection, thereby reducing overall transmission. This targeted approach focuses on individuals most likely to transmit the disease, using fewer vaccine doses and resources to efficiently reduce transmission by breaking chains of infection [\[LINK\]](#)
- The WHO Global Advisory Committee on Vaccine Safety (GACVS) published a statement on 4 October on the safety of mpox vaccines for use in high-risk groups. [\[LINK\]](#)

### Why is it concerning?

- **Epidemiological context:** According to the Regional Mpox Bulletin from the WHO African region, **Angola** confirmed its first case of mpox on 15 November 2024. The case involves a 27-year-old Congolese national living in Mabor Commune, Luanda Province. [\[LINK\]](#)  
In **Uganda**, while most of the cases (64%) are from the Greater Kampala Metropolitan Area, “the increasing geographical spread of the disease in the country underscores the need for a more decentralized response focusing on the key drivers in the hotspots, with the active involvement of leaders at all levels. Cumulatively, 56 districts have been affected while 49 remain active”.[\[LINK\]](#)  
In **Kenya**, mpox cases are primarily concentrated along the main A104 corridor (Kampala–Nakuru–Nairobi–Mombasa), mainly within heterosexual networks, with a few cases linked to household transmission.[\[LINK\]](#)
- **Erosion of trust in healthcare authorities:** The lack of trust in health authorities intensifies skepticism and undermines efforts to manage the crisis effectively. Distrust in the reported mpox case numbers can lead people to disregard preventive measures and downplay the seriousness of the situation—particularly during the festive season, when increased social interactions and changes in sexual behavior heighten the risk of transmission.
- **Vaccine hesitancy:** Vaccine hesitancy has a direct impact on the ability to control an outbreak. This is particularly concerning for mpox, which has the potential to spread in high-risk groups or in communities with low health literacy. Misinformation, lack of trust in health authorities, weak social norms and the perception of the disease as low-risk could all contribute to hesitancy.



- **Stigma against sex workers in relation to mpox:** Stigmatizing narratives in local media channels can undermine efforts to control the spread of mpox, but also can lead to further marginalization of vulnerable groups, discouragement of individuals from seeking medical help, and exacerbation of public health risks.

### What can we do?

- **Amplify RCCE messages for mpox including on vaccination:**
  - Getting an mpox vaccine can help prevent infection.
  - People at risk of mpox can be vaccinated before exposure to prevent infection (pre-exposure prophylaxis), especially during an outbreak.
  - Mpox vaccine can also be given to people after they have contact with someone who has mpox (post-exposure prophylaxis).
  - Continue to take care to avoid getting and spreading mpox as it takes several weeks to develop immunity after being vaccinated
  - For those who acquire mpox after vaccination, the vaccine still protects against severe disease and hospitalization.
- **Address stigma and enhance media reporting on mpox:** To effectively manage the mpox outbreak, it is crucial to address the stigma surrounding the disease, particularly in vulnerable groups such as sex workers and marginalized communities. The media should play a key role in combating misinformation and reducing harmful stereotypes by providing accurate, evidence-based information. Media outlets should focus on promoting awareness of Mpox as a public health issue, emphasizing that it can affect anyone, regardless of sexual behavior, while highlighting the importance of prevention and early detection.
- **Strengthen information integrity and address disinformation:** Collaborative efforts with trusted medical professionals, community influencers, and media outlets can help disseminate accurate information and counteract the harmful effects of disinformation. Additionally, health authorities should engage in targeted educational campaigns that specifically address the myths and fears perpetuated by anti-vaccine figures ensuring that the public has access to reliable sources of information. Fact-checking organizations and social media platforms should also monitor and debunk disinformation in real-time to limit its spread, particularly during critical periods when mpox vaccination can be launched.

- **Reliable information from health authorities can help prevent public confusion and fear.** Actively communicate updates on disease prevention, cross border surveillance and response measures. Transparent information on screening protocols, healthcare capacity, and preventive efforts can restore public trust in the health system and reassure the population of effective infectious disease control.

## Persistent trend

### High distrust in Kenyan authorities in conversations about planned livestock vaccination campaigns may increase general vaccine hesitancy

Engagement: **22 posts, 50,034 likes, 16,117 comments**

- In the lead-up to January's planned livestock campaign in Kenya, there has been a significant surge in conversations across social media platforms, particularly X, Facebook, and YouTube. A large number of posts, comments, and videos are circulating, reflecting growing public interest and concern about the campaign.
- On X, debates are intensifying with hashtags like **#MyCowMyChoice**, as users reject government-imposed regulations and express intense frustration and disbelief regarding the upcoming livestock campaign. Many commenters are vocal about their distrust of the government's agenda, with some viewing the vaccination initiative as an attempt to push a hidden agenda. The overwhelming tone in these posts suggests a deep resistance, as users make it clear they are not willing to "board" or support the proposed measures.

- Below are some examples: [[LINK](#), [LINK](#), [LINK](#), [LINK](#), [LINK](#)]

Shame on you !! You are trying to push the vaccination agenda, we are not boarding!

Tunawaonea 18. Our cows won't be vaccinated still.

Just tell the government to call it off. People can manage to treat their livestock without government interference.

Vaccination should incur seeking consent from farmers first not forcing untried vaccines with us.

Indigenous cattle breeds like Sahiwal and Boran are the main targets of this shady, government-backed vaccine push by Bill Gates.

- In addition to the strong opposition to the livestock vaccination campaign, a significant portion of the conversation on X centers around concerns about vaccine consent and the lack of consultation with key stakeholders such as the Veterinary Association of Kenya. Conspiracy narratives are also monitored on X by private users and local politicians who claim that "Bill Gates is behind the production of these vaccines", and are attempting to exert control over Kenya's agricultural sector through the vaccination program. [[LINK](#), [LINK](#), [LINK](#)]
- **Facebook** has seen a surge in activity within Kenyan digital media spaces, with pastoralists, farmers, and activists actively engaging in discussions about the potential impact of the livestock campaign. Users are sharing a wide range of concerns including fears of government overreach. There is growing apprehension about the government's role in mandating such policies without sufficient consultation with local communities or key stakeholders. [[LINK](#), [LINK](#), [LINK](#)]
- President Ruto and members of Parliament affiliated with his government have also been vocal on **Facebook**, defending the benefits of vaccinating livestock. They emphasize that the initiative aims to enhance livestock value chains and build resilience within the sector, framing it as a necessary step for economic growth and improved public health. [[LINK](#), [LINK](#), [LINK](#), [LINK](#)]

- Meanwhile, **YouTube** has become a hub for in-depth discussions and expert analysis, with local journalists and politicians dissecting the implications of the initiative [[LINK](#), [LINK](#)]
- The volume of online activity indicates heightened engagement, signaling that the livestock campaign is a key topic of debate, with various stakeholders mobilizing ahead of its implementation. However, this intense online discourse may also contribute to broader issues of vaccine hesitancy and deepening distrust in public authorities. As misinformation about the campaign spreads—such as conspiracy theories linking figures like Bill Gates to vaccine production—many online users are growing increasingly skeptical of government-led health initiatives. This skepticism, fueled by a lack of consultation with key stakeholders and the perception of government overreach, may further erode public confidence in vaccines and official health measures, not just for livestock but for broader public health campaigns in the future.

## Trend to watch

### Ugandan media reports panic among cattle breeders following an anthrax outbreak that claimed two people's lives

- According to the Nile Post, panic has struck Sembabule District, especially among cattle breeders, due to an anthrax outbreak that has resulted in the deaths of two people and several cattle. The disease is believed to have spread from cattle brought in from Kazo District. [[LINK](#)]

## Key resources

### Mpox

#### Resources for social listening analysts

- [WHO](#), Public health taxonomy for social listening on mpox conversations

#### Resources for journalists & fact checking

- [Internews](#), reporting on mpox, a guide for journalists
- [WHO](#), comprehensive list of mpox webinar series
- [AFP Fact check](#), WHO mpox emergency declaration does not advise lockdowns
- [DW](#), Fact check: No link between mpox and COVID vaccination

- [DW](#), Fact check: Four fakes about mpox

#### **Resources/Content for social media**

- [Viral Facts Africa](#), mpox social media kit with engaging explainers and debunks
- [WHO](#), LIVE: Q&A on #mpox. Join us and #AskWHO your questions!
- [WHO](#), Episode #124 - mpox: what you need to know

#### **Technical update**

- [WHO](#), Strategic framework for enhancing prevention and control of mpox
- [WHO](#), Mpox in the Democratic Republic of Congo
- [Africa CDC](#), Mpox situation in Africa
- [WHO](#), Multi-country outbreak of mpox, External situation report#44 - 23 December 2024

#### **Public health guidance/RCCE**

- [WHO](#), the Global Mpox Dashboard
- [WHO](#), Risk communication and community engagement (RCCE) for monkeypox outbreaks: interim guidance, 24 June 2022.
- [WHO](#), Public health advice for sex workers on mpox
- [WHO](#), Considerations for border health and points of entry for mpox: interim guidance
- [WHO](#), Community protection for the mpox response: a comprehensive set of actions

#### **Mpox vaccines**

- [WHO](#), Mpox Q&A, vaccines
- [WHO](#), Mpox immunization

## **Cholera**

#### **Resources/Content for social media**

- [WHO](#), cholera outbreaks, W&A
- [WHO](#), Cholera fact sheet
- [Viral Facts Africa](#), cholera social media toolkit with engaging explainers and debunks
- Social Science in Epidemics: [cholera lessons learned](#)

#### **Resources for social listening analysts**

- [Global Task Force on Cholera Control](#), clarifying rumors and community concerns

## Methodology

The social media listening process relies on a combination of social media analyses conducted for French, English and Lusophone-speaking countries. Engagements, otherwise known as interactions, **refer to the number of likes, comments, reactions and re-shares on a post.**

This is not a perfect measure of engagement:

- Some may have seen the post and chosen not to interact with it;
- Commenting on or re-sharing a post may constitute a more meaningful form of engagement than simply reacting to it;
- We are not systematically distinguishing between the types of responses that each engagement generates (e.g. while a post may contain misinformation, people may be countering/debunking it in the comments).

We seek to mitigate these limitations by:

- Scanning comments and monitoring reactions to qualitatively evaluate responses to each post;
- Assessing the velocity of a post (i.e. how fast is it obtaining reactions, likes, and shares) and the re-emergence of specific themes;
- Identifying whether the post is shared across a variety of platforms and sources (broad engagement), or simply soliciting a high level of attention within a given community/platform (siloed engagement).

The monitoring reports are produced using NewsWhip Analytics, Google Trends. As a result, data may be biased towards data emerging from formal news outlets/ official social media pages, and does not incorporate content circulating on closed platforms or groups (e.g. private Facebook groups). We also rely on infodemic managers based in Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo and Kenya to provide insights into relevant national infodemic trends or offline content, as well as country-level reports. As we produce more content, we seek to triangulate and corroborate information across these groups to strengthen our infodemic response.