

Africa Infodemic Response Alliance

A WHO-HOSTED NETWORK



AIRA Infodemic Trends Report

6 November – 18 November 2024

Weekly brief #142

Top concerns

[Claims About Mpox Vaccine Ingredients in Kenya Spark Misinformation and Conspiracy Theories](#)

Topics include fears of vaccine contamination, false allegations of HIV antigens, and erosion of public trust in vaccination efforts.

[Distrust in Health Authorities and Misinformation Surround Kenya's Livestock Vaccination Program Ahead of 2025 Rollout](#)

Topics include allegations of vaccine risks, skepticism fueled by past health campaigns, and conspiracy theories linking the program to hidden agendas.

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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 15 October to 5 November 2024 in Africa. For more information, please contact please contact the WHO AIRA team: Yara El Moussaoui ely@who.int
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[Claims About mpox Vaccine Ingredients in Kenya Spark Misinformation and Conspiracy Theories](#)

Engagement: **22 posts, 3899 likes, 1341 comments, 2588 shares/retweets**

Social media commentary and situation at a glance

- **Escalation of Dangerous Misinformation Through Media:** A Nation Africa [article](#) (now removed) and its associated social media posts, including a viral tweet and Facebook post, have gained significant traction. These posts claim that Kenya is on high alert due to fears circulating on social media that the mpox vaccine, approved by the World Health Organization for deployment in Africa, is a contaminated version of the COVID-19 vaccine. These unverified claims have sparked intense debate and fueled mistrust in vaccine safety.



- **Limited Access Exacerbates Misunderstanding:** The article is behind a paywall, and for non-subscribers, only the headline and the first two paragraphs are visible. These sections repeat unsubstantiated fears of vaccine contamination, leaving readers without access to the context or expert insights provided later in the article.

- **Contradictions Within the Full Article:** While the full article debunks the contamination claims with expert quotes, this information appears after the paywall. Unfortunately, the introductory sections, which are publicly visible, continue to amplify misinformation, undermining the credibility of the expert perspectives later in the piece.
- **Spread of False Claims About Vaccine Ingredients:** Parallel to the Nation Africa coverage, false claims alleging that the mpox vaccine contains HIV antigens are still circulating widely on platforms like Twitter and Facebook. These narratives, often amplified by conspiracy theorists, are fueling fear and skepticism toward vaccination efforts, complicating public health communication.

The so called **Mpox** pandemic is just a false alarm and a depopulation scheme that's to spearhead **HIV AIDS** pandemic like the globalists did the 1980s in pretense of smallpox vaccine which contained **HIV AIDS** antigens.

These **Mpox** vaccines contain **HIV AIDS** antigens . Do not

Do not under any circumstances get the **Mpox** vaccines.
It contains **HIV** antigens.
Read what happened when they added the same antigens in Smallpox vaccines.
Hint, **HIV/AIDS** virus was born.
Do not comply.
These vaccines aren't safe.



Wesley Kibande ✓
@Wesley_Kibande

Immediately after successful campaigns about HIV outbreak, **MPox** vaccines will be launched in December. **!!** The only way to stay safe from **Mpox** nowadays is to switch of your TV & Radio!

Why is it concerning?

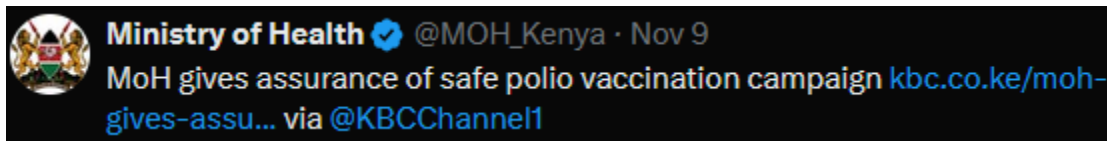
- **Public Health Impact: Misinformation and Its Threat to Vaccination Uptake:** The ongoing mpox outbreak in Kenya, driven by the highly transmissible clade 1b strain, presents a serious public health threat, particularly to high-risk populations. The strain's severity highlights the urgent need for widespread vaccination. However, misinformation—such as claims in the Nation Africa article and misleading social media narratives about vaccine contamination—has deepened public distrust in the mpox vaccine. This distrust threatens to lower vaccination rates, delaying outbreak containment and increasing risks for vulnerable groups. Addressing misinformation and emphasizing its real-world health impact are vital for effective response efforts.

- **Erosion of Trust in Vaccine Safety:** The misleading Nation Africa headline and viral social media posts amplify unverified fears about the mpox vaccine, potentially undermining public confidence in vaccines overall. This erosion of trust may deter individuals from accepting the mpox vaccine and other routine immunizations, hampering efforts to control the disease and increasing vulnerability to preventable illnesses.
- **Amplification of Conspiracy Theories:** The spread of false claims, including those alleging HIV antigens in the mpox vaccine, feeds into conspiracy narratives that question vaccine safety and intent. These narratives, often targeting vulnerable populations, complicate public health communication and can lead to increased vaccine hesitancy or outright refusal.
- **Misleading Media Practices:** The paywall structure of the Nation Africa article exacerbates the problem by limiting access to the full context and expert rebuttals, leaving the majority of readers with only the misleading headline and introduction. This approach undermines journalistic integrity and allows misinformation to proliferate unchecked, especially on social media.
- **Public Health Risks from Viral Content:** Nation Africa's posts on Twitter and Facebook reach millions, amplifying harmful narratives about vaccine safety. Uncorrected or outdated headlines and posts can lead to widespread public confusion, compromising the effectiveness of vaccine rollout campaigns and public health interventions.

What can we do?

- **Engage with Media Outlets to Correct Misinformation:** A priority action is to formally engage with Nation Africa to address the misleading headline, article introduction, and social media posts. Request a public correction or retraction of the article, emphasizing the risk such content poses to public health. Collaborate with the editors to ensure that factual information, including expert debunking of vaccine contamination fears, is prominently highlighted and accessible without a paywall.
- **Leverage Trusted Voices to Rebuild Confidence:** Mobilize local and regional health experts, community leaders, and public figures to actively counter misinformation on social media and other platforms. These trusted voices can provide clear, evidence-based information to dispel myths about the mpox vaccine, helping rebuild public trust and encourage vaccine uptake. [\[LINK\]](#) [\[LINK\]](#) [\[LINK\]](#)
- **Monitor and Address Narratives That Undermine Public Health Goals:** Focus real-time monitoring efforts on identifying misinformation narratives that directly hinder public health objectives, such as reducing vaccination uptake or increasing fear around health interventions. Collaborate with platforms like Twitter and Facebook to report harmful posts and advocate for their removal. Collaborate with digital influencers to amplify accurate information and drown out harmful narratives.

- **Strengthen Coordination with Global and Regional Partners:** Leverage the WHO's upcoming emergency meeting on mpox (22 November 2024) [\[LINK\]](#) to spotlight the urgent need for coordinated efforts to counter misinformation. Advocate for a unified approach involving public health agencies, governments, and media outlets to address disinformation and promote accurate health communication.
- **Increase Vaccine Accessibility and Transparency:** Address concerns about vaccine safety by providing transparent data on vaccine development, testing, and approval processes. Ensure that vaccine distribution plans are equitable and prioritize vulnerable populations, including children and immunocompromised individuals. Visible efforts to ensure accessibility and fairness can help counter mistrust fueled by conspiracy theories. [\[LINK\]](#) [\[LINK\]](#) [\[LINK\]](#) [\[LINK\]](#)



Kenya

[Distrust in Health Authorities and Misinformation Surround Kenya's Livestock Vaccination Program Ahead of 2025 Rollout](#)

Engagement: **4 posts, 1713 likes, 91 comments, 1395 retweets**

Social media commentary and situation at a glance

- **Distrust Toward Health Authorities Influences Public Perception:** Social media users have expressed growing distrust toward WHO and the Kenyan government, driven in part by skepticism over past health campaigns, such as the COVID-19 vaccination drive and the polio vaccination program. Allegations from the polio campaign, including claims of vaccine-related child fatalities, have fueled ongoing public mistrust. Although the Kenyan Ministry of Health has responded to these allegations in an effort to clarify and address misinformation, the lingering doubts have significantly impacted vaccine confidence. This erosion of trust now threatens the acceptance of upcoming initiatives, including the nationwide livestock vaccination program. [\[LINK\]](#) [\[LINK\]](#)
- **Concerns About Livestock Vaccination Program:** The announcement of a nationwide livestock vaccination program starting in January 2025 has elicited mixed reactions online. Many users highlight its importance in preventing animal diseases and securing international markets for Kenyan livestock products.

However, a vocal segment of social media users has raised suspicions about the program, questioning its safety, intent, and timing in light of broader mistrust in health and governmental interventions. [\[LINK\]](#) [\[LINK\]](#) [\[LINK\]](#)

- **Misinformation Fuels Skepticism:** Conspiracy theories have emerged linking the livestock vaccination program to prior health controversies, such as claims that vaccines are harmful or part of a larger agenda. Some users speculate that the program could have hidden risks to both livestock and human health, exacerbating fears and resistance to its implementation. [LINK](#) [LINK](#)

Why is it concerning?

- **Erosion of Trust in Public Health and Veterinary Initiatives:** The widespread distrust toward health authorities, fueled by prior controversies surrounding COVID-19 and polio vaccination campaigns, has created a challenging environment for public acceptance of the upcoming livestock vaccination program. Allegations of vaccine-related harm, such as unverified claims about child fatalities linked to polio vaccines, are driving skepticism, undermining confidence in both human and animal health interventions. This mistrust poses a significant barrier to the success of the program.
- **Risks to Animal Health and Economic Stability:** The nationwide livestock vaccination program aims to protect millions of cattle, goats, and sheep from diseases and secure international livestock markets for Kenya. However, skepticism and resistance to the program could lead to lower vaccination uptake, increasing the risk of disease outbreaks in livestock. Such outbreaks could have severe economic consequences, particularly for rural and pastoralist communities reliant on livestock for their livelihoods.
- **Amplification of Misinformation and Conspiracy Theories:** Conspiracy theories linking the livestock vaccination program to harmful agendas or hidden risks have gained traction online. These narratives undermine the program's credibility and exacerbate fear among the public. The association of this initiative with past health controversies further compounds the challenge, making it more difficult to counter misinformation and foster community trust.
- **Impact on Broader Public Health Efforts:** Resistance to the livestock vaccination program could signal a broader decline in public trust toward vaccination campaigns, spilling over into human health initiatives. This growing skepticism could undermine future health interventions, reduce compliance with public health recommendations, and exacerbate vulnerability to preventable diseases, both in humans and animals.

What can we do?

- **Engage Trusted Community Leaders and Organizations:** Collaborate with community leaders, livestock associations, and pastoralist networks to serve as ambassadors for the vaccination program. These trusted voices can help counter misinformation, explain the program's intent, and reassure skeptical populations.

Providing training for these leaders on vaccine safety and benefits can amplify their ability to address concerns effectively.

- **Address Misinformation Proactively:** Establish a dedicated misinformation response team to monitor online narratives and dispel false claims linking the livestock vaccination program to harmful agendas. Partner with platforms like Viral Facts Africa to create tailored, fact-based content, including infographics, videos, and Q&A sessions, that directly address misconceptions about vaccine safety and effectiveness.
- **Leverage Historical Success Stories:** Share examples of past successful livestock vaccination campaigns in Kenya and other countries to demonstrate their impact on preventing animal disease outbreaks and supporting livelihoods. Highlight how vaccination has bolstered Kenya's reputation in international livestock markets, encouraging stakeholders to see the broader benefits of participation.
- **Foster Multi-Sectoral Collaboration:** Work with agricultural, veterinary, and public health sectors to ensure the program is implemented transparently and efficiently. This includes engaging the private sector and NGOs to provide additional support for outreach, vaccine distribution, and technical assistance.
- **Promote Early Community Involvement:** Involve livestock owners and community members in planning and decision-making processes for the vaccination rollout. Offering opportunities for dialogue and feedback can build ownership and reduce resistance to the program.
- **Monitor and Evaluate Public Perceptions:** Conduct regular surveys and focus groups to gauge public attitudes toward the vaccination program and identify emerging concerns. Use these insights to adapt messaging and outreach strategies dynamically, ensuring continued relevance and effectiveness.

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

Resources/Content for social media

- [VFA](#), Mpox social media kit
- [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
- [Africa CDC](#), Mpox situation in Africa
- [WHO](#), multi-country outbreak of Mpox

Public health guidance/RCCE

- [WHO](#), Risk communication and community engagement (RCCE) for mpox
- [WHO](#), the Global Mpox Dashboard
- [SSHAP](#), Key Considerations: Risk Communication and Community Engagement for Mpox Vaccination in Eastern DRC
- [WHO](#), Risk communication and community engagement (RCCE) for mpox outbreaks: interim guidance, 24 June 2022.
- [WHO](#), Public health advice for sex workers on mpox

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 (e.g. Whatsapp) 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.