

Africa Infodemic Response Alliance

A WHO-HOSTED NETWORK



AIRA Infodemic Trends Report

3-10 June 2024

Weekly brief #123

Top concerns

[Street vending, concerns about reemergence of cholera and drought in Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique](#)

Searches about cholera in Zimbabwe and Mozambique highlight local media's interest in drought as a national disaster, all published a day after World Environment Day (5 June). As cholera spreads in Eastern Zambia, online users question why it emerges in July when there is no expected rainfall. Meanwhile, market sellers are frustrated with local authorities for dismantling their stalls at the Saturday market without prior engagement.

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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 3-10 June 2024 in Africa.

For more information, please contact the WHO AIRA team:

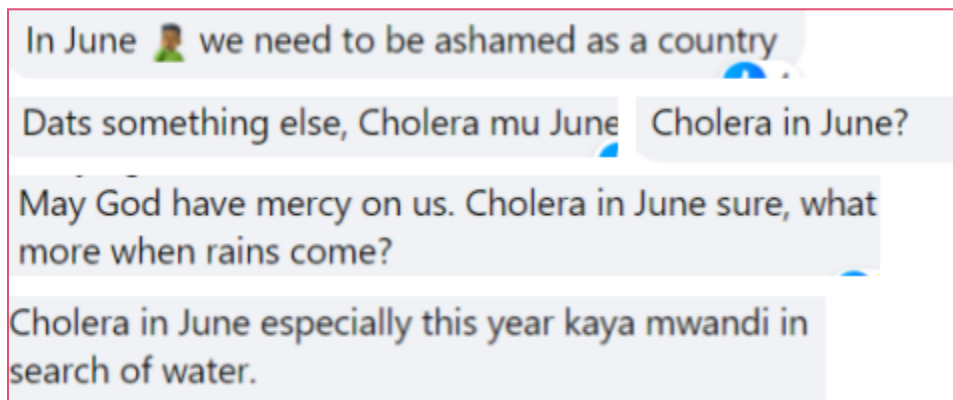
Elsa Maria Karam karam@who.int, **Elodie Ho** hoelodie@who.int

Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique

Street vending, concerns about reemergence of cholera and drought in Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique

Engagement: **21 posts, 2131 likes, 602 comments**

- As per a [video report](#) on 9 June by Diamond TV Zambia, a prominent broadcasting network in Zambia with 821K followers on Facebook, the cholera outbreak has extended from Chipata district to Lumezi. In our previous AIRA report, we alerted about Chipata's outbreak of acute diarrhea disease, suspected to be cholera.
- The unsanitary conditions and inadequate supply of water at Saturday market, where the first cases have been detected, are a major concern to health authorities. The closure of Saturday market has triggered anger among sellers who complain of financial hardships.
- The majority of online users are surprised, saddened and “ashamed” about the spread of cholera in June, asking why it spreads in June, with an emphasis on shortage of water with the current drought situation [[LINK](#), [LINK](#), [LINK](#)].



- A user in Harare, Zimbabwe expressed on [X](#) that fruits and vegetables sold by street vendors are contaminated emphasizing the proximity of sewage to their produce. This underscores the susceptibility of markets to cholera transmission.
- Searches of “cholera” in articles shared by news agencies highlight drought as a prominent theme, contrary to social media commentary. The articles, shared on 6 June, a day after World Environment Day feature analysis from Zimbabwe's [local authorities' spokesperson](#) and [media entrepreneur](#), a critic of Zimbabwean authorities. Both articles discuss the impact of Zimbabwe’s appeal of 3.9 Billion USD to respond to food insecurity in the country after declaring it a state of emergency.

- [Mozambican leading online news agency](#), Club of Mozambique, focused on the general unfolding impact of El Niño in the region.

Why is it concerning?

- Zambia declared [drought as a state of emergency](#). This exacerbates water scarcity, poor sanitation and affects vulnerable populations, all of these are significant contributing factors to the spread of cholera. Limited access to clean water increases the likelihood of contaminated water sources, facilitating the transmission of the cholera bacteria.
- Local authorities consider street vending in the country [illegal](#) in Zambia ;unless when conducted in designated places. According to [Diamond TV Zambia](#), Chipata local council demolished and burned stalls of street vendors without previous engagement.
- [Market places and border areas like Chipata in Eastern province are at high risk of cholera](#) **due to low levels of hygiene**. Local authorities in Zambia have previously called for the need to intensify prevention campaigns at market places and border areas in the province which have predominantly shown low compliance levels to good hygienic practices.

The [Saturday market](#), situated in the heart of Chipata city's central business district, stands as the largest market hub in the area. It serves as a trading center where numerous farmers from various regions converge to sell their produce to local traders. Local health authorities in Chipata confirmed on 6 June that [34](#) out of 49 cases of cholera were linked to Saturday market restaurants.
- Zambia's electricity provider ZESCO Limited, announced a [12-hour daily power cuts from 9 June](#). ZESCO had previously cited “low water levels supplying its hydropower plants as the reason for the decision” according to [GardaWorld](#). “These are the first nationwide power cuts since February 2023”. The [Zambezi River authority](#), responsible for the environmental management of the Zambezi River which flows between Zambia and Zimbabwe, has also stated that 12.54% of the Zambezi River, the fourth-longest river in Africa's current, can be used for power generation compared with 2023's 31.09%.

What can we do?

- Local authorities and cholera responders engage with market leaders to identify interventions to improve sanitation in the marketplace.
- Explain in an engaging video why cholera outbreaks can occur at any time of the year, irrespective of the season actors such as inadequate sanitation

infrastructure and poor water quality create an environment conducive to the spread of cholera bacteria.

- Emphasis on preparedness in Lumezi district can include attention to water supply and access to clean water.
- Advocate for washing stations in Chipata and Lumezi. Explain to street vendors how regular handwashing with soap and water is one of the most effective measures for preventing cholera transmission and that even during dry seasons, inadequate sanitation and hygiene practices can exacerbate the spread of cholera
- Host community engagement events in Chipata and Lumezi to communicate how drought coupled with water/power rationing in the country exacerbates water scarcity, sanitation challenges, and ultimately contributes to the spread of cholera.

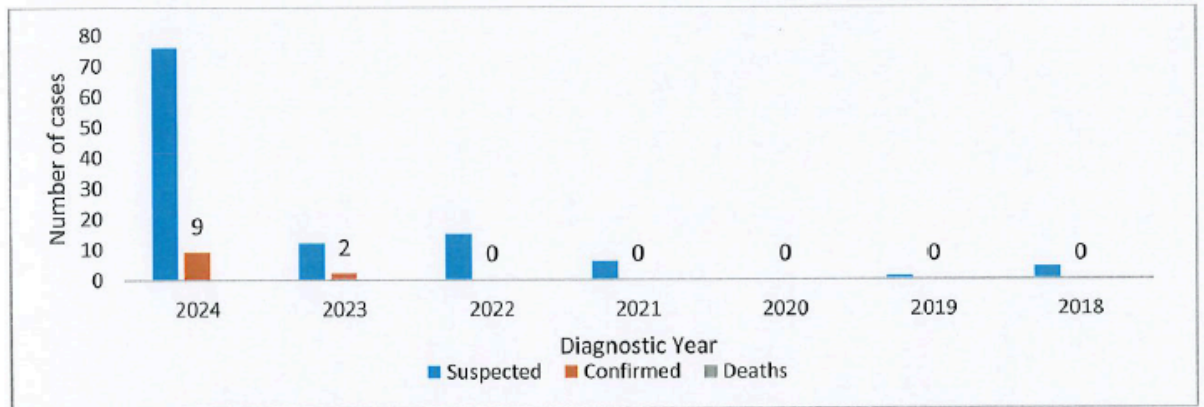
Trends to watch

Potential information gaps around measles in Namibia around the cause of the virus, prevention and interventions

Engagement: **4 posts, 819 likes, 69 comments**

- Shipi FM, a Namibian radio station shared a Facebook [post](#) highlighting that suspected cases of measles have been reported in Omaruru district, Erongo region, in the Western part of the country.
- Three online users commenting on Facebook posts by Namibian news media agencies have asked about the [causes of the virus](#), [methods of prevention](#), and whether [immunization is effective in preventing infection](#).
- According to [Situational Report #3](#) on the measles outbreak, the Omaruru district has reported the highest number of both suspected and confirmed cases in 2024, in the past seven years with 76 suspected cases and 9 confirmed cases.

Figure 2: Trend of Measles suspected, confirmed cases, and measles deaths in the last 7 years in Omaruru district, 2018/2024.



Source: Republic of Namibia, Ministry of Health and Social Services, ERongo Health Directorate, 7 June 2024

On World Environment Day, climate action is needed as South Sudan gears up for imminent floods

Engagement: **6 posts, 579 likes, 89 comments**

- South Sudanese Eye radio highlighted this week flood updates from different states in South Sudan. This included the [need for a contingency plan](#) by Jonglei State to respond to the expected floods. According to UNICEF in 2022, [“Jonglei State has been the hardest hit with floodwaters that are slow to recede, even now in the dry season, affecting over 305,000 people.”](#)
- A potential emerging concern in South Sudan is around flooding of the Nile in various sections. Online [users, communities](#) and [local authorities](#) have expressed that parts of the dykes (flood embankments) may not be strong enough.
- The majority of online users are [saddened](#) by photos taken in Unity state where flooding surpassed the dykes constructed to prevent flooding and call for more [assistance](#) to support all citizens of South Sudan.
- On World Environment Day (5 June), [“The Ministry of Environment and Forestry urged communities in lowlands and flood-prone areas to relocate to higher and safer grounds as forecast floods may wreak havoc.”](#)

Key resources

Cholera

- [WHO](#): Cholera fact sheets (English)
- [WHO Infographics](#): Cholera (English)
- [WHO Infographics](#): Kits Cholera
- [VFA](#): Preventive measures against cholera
- [Global Task Force on Cholera Control](#): About cholera
- [BBC](#): Cholera epidemic in Zambia
- [WHO](#): Cholera epidemics, Q&A

Measles

- [WHO](#), Measles fact sheet
- [VFA](#), Measles social media toolkit
- [WHO](#) literature on the risk of measles for children
- [UNICEF](#) immunization roadmap

Climate and Health

- [WHO](#), Communicating on climate change and health, toolkit for health professionals
- [WHO](#), Technical webinar series on climate and health
- VFA, EXPLAINER- Flood-related diseases [[ENG](#), [FR](#)]
- VFA, EXPLAINER- Climate Change & Health [[ENG](#), [FR](#)]

Crimean Congo Hemorrhagic Fever

- [WHO](#), CCHF
- [VFA](#), social media kit on CCHF

Methodology

The social media listening process relies on a combination of social media analyses conducted for French, English and Lusophone-speaking countries.

The shift from a social media listening and monitoring conducted by only one person for the entire African region, to a combined one based on analysis conducted by three different people, may result in a less detailed and exhaustive report.

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, Crowdtangle, Google Trends and UNICEF Talkwalker dashboards, as well as the WHO EPI-WIN weekly infodemic insight reports and the WHO EARS platform.

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 our fact-checking partners, who provide invaluable insights into relevant national and regional trends or content, as well as country-level reports, including the South Africa Social Listening Weekly Report and the Mali Social Listening Weekly Report.

In producing these summaries and recommendations, we have consulted community feedback survey reports, as well as monitoring and recommendations from AIRA partners. We also draw from WHO EPI-WIN weekly reports and UNICEF monthly reports to formulate recommendations. As we produce more content, we seek to triangulate and corroborate information across these groups to strengthen our infodemic response.