

# Africa Infodemic Response Alliance

A WHO-HOSTED NETWORK



**AIRA Infodemic Trends Report**

**15 October - 5 November 2024**

**Weekly brief #141**

## Top concerns

### [Detection of mpox in a Nigerian national in Mauritius has triggered a wave of discriminatory comments and conspiracy theories](#)

Topics include fears of disease spread, calls for stricter immigration controls, and stigmatization of migrant communities.

### [Continued concerns and stigmatising narratives regarding Marburg virus detection in Rwanda](#)

Concerns include long-term risk of transmission, questions about specific preventive measures and discrimination against those who have recovered.

### [Cholera Outbreak in Comoros and Madagascar's Maritime Suspension Reveal Growing Misinformation and Public Concern Over Cross-Border Health Measures.](#)

Discussions focus on fears of disease spread, economic impact of trade restrictions, and conspiracy theories surrounding cross-border health measures.

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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](mailto:ely@who.int)  
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## [Detection of mpox in a Nigerian national in Mauritius has triggered a wave of discriminatory comments and conspiracy theories](#)

Engagement: **6 posts, 8622 likes, 1147 comments, 464 shares**

### Social media commentary and situation at a glance

- The detection of mpox in a [Nigerian national](#) in Mauritius has triggered a wave of discriminatory remarks on social media, with many posts targeting Nigerians and migrant populations, blaming them for introducing diseases and posing health risks to the local population. [LINK](#) [LINK](#)
- Discussions are emerging around Mauritius's public health policies, with users questioning the country's preparedness for infectious disease control and highlighting the need for better screening measures for incoming travellers. Some comments reflect a lack of trust in the government's handling of the situation and call for stricter border controls. [LINK](#)
- False information is circulating, linking the mpox case to unrelated issues such as water and electricity shortages. Conspiracy theories suggest that the virus's detection is a diversion from these infrastructural problems, leading to public confusion and fear. [LINK](#) [LINK](#) [LINK](#)

### Why is it concerning?

- **Stigmatization and Discrimination:** The detection of mpox in a Nigerian national has led to a surge of discriminatory commentary targeting Nigerians and migrant communities in Mauritius. Such narratives stigmatize individuals based on nationality, and risk further marginalizing migrant populations. This discriminatory reaction can also deter individuals from seeking medical help or reporting symptoms due to fear of backlash, which may compromise public health efforts to control and prevent the spread of the virus.
- **Erosion of Trust in Public Health Policies:** Social media discussions questioning Mauritius's preparedness for infectious disease management and calling for stricter border controls signal a lack of public confidence in the government's response mechanisms. When public trust diminishes, it undermines the effectiveness of health interventions and may foster resistance to following health guidance, potentially worsening the spread of mpox and other diseases.
- **Misinformation and Conspiracy Theories:** False information linking the mpox case to issues like water and electricity shortages has begun circulating online. These conspiracy theories suggest that mpox detection is a smokescreen to distract from infrastructural issues, leading to confusion, misplaced fear, and misinformation. Such narratives can divert attention from factual health information, impeding public understanding of preventive measures and complicating response efforts to the mpox situation.

## What can we do?

- **Enhance Public Awareness and Address Stigma:** Launch targeted awareness campaigns to educate the public on mpox transmission and prevention, emphasizing that the virus is not linked to nationality. This can help reduce stigma and encourage affected individuals to seek medical assistance without fear of discrimination.
- **Strengthen Information Integrity and Address Misinformation:** Collaborate with social media platforms to monitor and flag false information related to mpox. Share verified health information and dispel conspiracy theories connecting the virus to unrelated issues, such as infrastructure challenges. Reliable information from health authorities can help prevent public confusion and fear.
- **Promote Transparent Communication on Public Health Preparedness/Readiness:** Government and health agencies should actively communicate updates on disease prevention 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.
- **Encourage Community Engagement and Support for Marginalized Groups:** Partner with community leaders and organizations to foster solidarity and prevent marginalization of migrant populations. Messages of unity, shared responsibility, and mutual support can be amplified through local leaders to mitigate discriminatory reactions and reinforce community resilience.

## Comoros /Madagascar

[Cholera Outbreak in Comoros and Madagascar's Maritime Suspension Reveal Growing Misinformation and Public Concern Over Cross-Border Health Measures.](#)

Engagement: **3 posts, 1396 likes, 729 comments, 218 shares**

### Social media commentary and situation at a glance

- Following the recent cholera outbreak in Comoros, Madagascar's decision to suspend maritime connections with Comoros to curb potential cholera spread has generated a range of responses online. On one side, many users commend the precautionary step, seeing it as a necessary protective measure to prevent the disease from reaching Madagascar. However, a significant portion of the conversation highlights frustration from citizens and businesses reliant on maritime trade between the two islands, with posts raising concerns about the impact on the local economy and essential supply chains. [LINK](#)

- The outbreak in Comoros has sparked widespread social media discourse, with users expressing concerns over the health implications, particularly in vulnerable communities with limited access to clean water. The response on social platforms shows both support and worry, with many citizens urging the government to take stronger measures to contain the outbreak, while others express skepticism regarding the effectiveness of health interventions. [LINK](#)
- Social listening reveals the spread of misinformation linking the cholera outbreak to broader issues, such as economic control or government corruption. Conspiracy theories have surfaced, suggesting that the outbreak and subsequent travel restrictions are part of a strategy to exert control over local populations or distract from other socio-economic issues. This narrative has gained traction in some circles, especially among those who already express distrust in public institutions. [LINK](#)

### Why is it concerning?

- **Health Risks and Access Inequalities:** The cholera outbreak in Comoros has sparked extensive social media discussion, with particular focus on the heightened risks facing vulnerable communities that lack access to clean water and sanitation. Users are urging the government to strengthen containment efforts, underscoring the urgency of intervention in these areas. Without prompt and effective measures, cholera could spread rapidly, exacerbating the health impact on already marginalised populations.
- **Emerging Social Tensions and Uncertainty Following Maritime Suspension:** Madagascar's suspension of maritime links with Comoros as a preventive measure has sparked widespread online concern. While some support the decision, many express frustration over its impact on daily life, disrupted trade, and access to essential goods. The measure has exposed socio-economic vulnerabilities, with users calling for clearer guidance from authorities on sustaining livelihoods amid these restrictions.
- **Misinformation and Conspiracy Theories Undermining Trust:** Social listening has revealed that misinformation is linking the cholera outbreak to broader socio-political narratives, such as alleged government control or economic manipulation. These conspiracy theories are gaining traction among users already skeptical of public institutions, leading to an erosion of trust in health authorities. This spread of misinformation risks hindering public cooperation with health measures, potentially increasing resistance to future interventions.
- **Potential Backlash and Resistance to Health Interventions:** Public skepticism toward health interventions, as observed in social media conversations, reflects a broader challenge in maintaining public support for preventive actions. Negative sentiments toward health efforts in similar situations, such as polio vaccination campaigns, highlight the importance of building and maintaining trust to ensure community compliance with cholera prevention measures.

## What can we do?

- **Enhance Transparent Communication:** Regularly provide clear, accurate, and timely updates about the cholera outbreak, leveraging trusted sources such as the Ministry of Health and public health organizations. Transparent communication can help mitigate public concern, correct misinformation, and foster trust. Sharing updates on social media channels popular in Comoros and Madagascar will ensure wide reach and accessibility.
- **Counter Misinformation Through Targeted Campaigns:** Establish a dedicated team to monitor social media for misinformation linking cholera to unrelated issues such as economic control or corruption. This team can work with platforms like Viral Facts Africa to create localized, fact-based content addressing these conspiracy theories. Distributing engaging videos, infographics, and posts tailored to address specific misconceptions will help reinforce accurate narratives and prevent the spread of false information.
- **Promote Cross-Border Public Health Messaging:** In light of Madagascar's maritime suspension, create coordinated public health messages that explain the importance of cross-border measures for cholera containment. By collaborating with Comorian and Malagasy health authorities, the WHO can ensure unified messaging that emphasizes health security over political or economic motives, reducing public skepticism and fostering regional cooperation.
- **Supporting Vulnerable Communities through Community-Led Solutions and Trusted Voices:** Engage community leaders and trusted local figures to promote accurate information on cholera prevention, particularly among vulnerable populations with limited access to clean water and sanitation (WASH) resources. Trusted voices can play a vital role in dispelling myths, encouraging trust in health measures, and promoting behaviors that reduce cholera transmission. Recommendations can include supporting local initiatives for better sanitation, establishing accessible hand-washing stations, and providing educational workshops on water purification techniques to help communities protect themselves despite resource constraints.

## [Continued concerns and stigmatising narratives regarding Marburg virus detection in Rwanda](#)

Engagement: **433 likes, 276 comments, 153 retweets/shares**

### Social media commentary and situation at a glance

- The recent detection of the Marburg virus in Rwanda has prompted social media discussions about the virus's potential long-term transmission risks. **Many users express fears over whether individuals who have recovered could still transmit the virus, reflecting a general sense of uncertainty and concern about containment measures.**
- Social media users are seeking more clarity on specific preventive guidelines for individuals who have recovered from Marburg virus infection. **There is a growing demand for information on how recovered individuals can reintegrate into their communities safely, which indicates a need for clear, accessible public health guidance.** [LINK](#) [LINK](#)
- **Many comments indicate anxiety around potential stigma and discrimination against Marburg virus survivors.** Users discuss the societal impacts of infectious diseases, emphasizing the risk of social isolation for those who have recovered. **This highlights a rising concern that stigma could discourage individuals from seeking necessary medical help or disclosing symptoms.**
- Overall, the social media conversation reflects a **widespread sense of fear and uncertainty about the Marburg virus.** Many users express worry about the virus's potential spread within Rwanda and beyond, with some calling for increased information and preventive measures to help manage the public's anxieties.

### Why is this a cause for concern?

- **Lingering Transmission Fears:** Social media discussions reveal significant public concern over the potential for recovered Marburg virus patients to continue transmitting the virus. Many users are uncertain about containment measures and question whether the virus can still be spread long after recovery. This lingering fear underscores the need for clear communication from health authorities on transmission risks to reduce public anxiety and prevent misinformation.
- **Lack of Clear Guidelines for Recovered Individuals:** There is a growing demand on social media for explicit guidance on preventive measures for those who have recovered from Marburg virus infection. Many users express uncertainty about how survivors can reintegrate safely into their communities. Without accessible, detailed information, public confusion and concern may continue to grow, increasing the likelihood of fear-based stigma against survivors.



- **Stigma and Social Isolation Risks:** Conversations online indicate heightened anxiety about stigma and discrimination faced by Marburg virus survivors. Users discuss how infectious disease outbreaks often lead to social exclusion of survivors, which could discourage individuals from seeking medical help or disclosing symptoms. The risk of social isolation not only affects survivors' mental health but can also undermine public health efforts by reducing early reporting of symptoms.
- **Misinformation Amplifying Public Uncertainty:** The spread of misinformation about Marburg virus reintegration and transmission risks is fueling uncertainty and distrust in public health guidance. Some users are engaging with conspiracy theories or expressing skepticism toward health advice, which could lead to resistance against necessary containment and preventive actions. This atmosphere of distrust hinders the effectiveness of health interventions and can exacerbate public anxiety.

### What can we do?

- **Provide Clear and Ongoing Communication:** Share accurate, up-to-date information on Marburg virus transmission and recovery processes through trusted sources such as the Ministry of Health and WHO Rwanda. Frequent updates about containment measures, including specific guidelines for recovered individuals, can help address public concerns, build trust, and counter misinformation that contributes to public anxiety.
- **Develop Accessible Guidelines for Recovered Individuals:** Create detailed, easy-to-understand guidance on safe practices for Marburg survivors as they reintegrate into their communities. Providing these guidelines in local languages across multiple platforms will ensure they are widely accessible.
- **Countering Stigma through Community Engagement and Ethical Media Reporting:** Collaborate with community leaders, health professionals, and recovered Marburg Virus Disease survivors to create awareness campaigns that combat stigma and discrimination. Sharing personal stories of recovery and resilience from trusted community voices can foster compassion, understanding, and support for survivors, helping to reduce social isolation and encouraging others to seek help without fear of judgment. Additionally, provide training for media professionals on ethical reporting practices to ensure responsible and stigma-free coverage, contributing to a more informed and supportive public discourse.

## Trends to watch

### Rising Concern Over Genetically Modified Mosquitoes in Kenya

- Social media conversations in Kenya show a **resurgence of concerns regarding the use of genetically modified (GM) mosquitoes in malaria control efforts**. Many online users are linking these projects to conspiracy theories, associating them with foreign influence and high-profile figures like Bill Gates. This narrative reflects a **growing wariness toward health technologies perceived as foreign-led and lacking transparency**. [LINK](#) [LINK](#)
- The discussions indicate broader public skepticism around new health interventions, especially those perceived to have hidden risks. Comments reflect concerns over possible unintended effects of GM mosquitoes on the environment and human health, with **users calling for more comprehensive information and transparency from health authorities**. [LINK](#)
- Many commenters are **advocating for increased transparency from the government and health organizations** regarding the objectives, risks, and safety of the GM mosquito projects. There is a call for **more community engagement** to address concerns and build public trust, with a significant number of users emphasizing the need for local involvement in decision-making processes to reduce the perception of foreign influence.
- **Misinformation about genetically modified mosquitoes is spreading**, with claims of hidden agendas and health risks related to foreign control. This highlights a need for **targeted communication** to counteract conspiracy theories and provide factual information about malaria control efforts, ensuring the public understands the benefits and safety measures associated with these projects.

### Circulation of Misinformation Following Dr. Wahome Ngare Interview

- **Vaccine Misinformation Resurgence:** Following Dr. Wahome Ngare's October 22, 2024, interview on the Lynn Ngugi Network (with over 1 million followers and 58,350 views), claims that **vaccines like COVID-19, tetanus, HPV, and malaria are designed to reduce African fertility** have reignited conspiracy theories, fueling vaccine skepticism. [LINK](#)
- **Skepticism Toward HPV and Malaria Vaccines:** Statements of Dr. Ngare's questioning the necessity of HPV and malaria vaccines are spreading, potentially undermining public health efforts. These narratives highlight the need for stronger public education on the benefits of these vaccines.

- **Promotion of Unverified Remedies:** Dr. Ngare's endorsement of unproven treatments, such as **Artemisia tea for malaria**, has encouraged interest in **alternative medicine**, increasing risks around ineffective treatments.



### Kenyan Doctor exposes World Health Organization dark agenda in depopulating Africa through vaccines



Lynn Ngugi ✓  
1.08M subscribers

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3.8K | Share

## 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

## MVD

- **Resources/Content for social media**
- [WHO](#), Marburg virus disease Q&A
- [WHO](#), Marburg virus disease fact sheet
- [VFA](#), social media kit

## Cholera

- [WHO](#): Cholera Fact Sheets (English)
- [WHO Infographic](#): Cholera (English)
- [WHO Infographic](#): Cholera Kits
- [VFA](#): Cholera social networking toolkit
- [Global Task Force on Cholera Control](#): About Cholera
- [WHO](#): Cholera Outbreaks, Q&A

## Malaria

- [WHO](#) , Q&A on malaria vaccines (RTS,S and R21) (English and French)
- [WHO Infographics](#) : RTS,S malaria vaccine (English)
- [WHO infographics](#) : RTS,S malaria vaccine
- [WHO](#): World Malaria Report 2023
- [VFA](#): Malaria social networking toolkit
- [WHO](#): Malaria: The Malaria Vaccine Implementation Program (MVIP)

## 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.